

**EVANGELICALISM AND THE SOCIALIST REVIVAL:  
A STUDY OF RELIGION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE  
IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AIRDRIE**

**Michael A McCabe**

A Thesis Presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
at the University of Edinburgh in 1992.



## CONTENTS

Abstract.

Declaration.

List of Tables.

List of Maps.

Preface.

Abbreviations.

Introduction.

- Chapter 1.      Evangelical-Mission      Culture      in      the  
                         Nineteenth Century.
- Chapter 2.      Evangelicalism and the Socialist Revival,  
                         1880-1914: A Reinterpretation.
- Chapter 3.      The Rise and Decline of Weaving Airdrie,  
                         1790-c1840.
- Chapter 4.      Out of the Fowler's Snare: Religion and the  
                         Construction of Community at Airdrie, 1790-  
                         c1820.
- Chapter 5.      Into the New World: The Impact of  
                         Industrialisation on Community and Culture  
                         in Airdrie, 1820-c1875.
- Chapter 6.      Images and Realities: Airdrie after 1820.
- Chapter 7.      As Sure as Steeples Point to Heaven: A  
                         Chronicle of the Churches in Airdrie, 1820-  
                         1880.
- Chapter 8.      Sounding the Trumpets, Beating the Drums:  
                         Religious Competition and Conflict in  
                         Airdrie in the 1830s and '40s.
- Chapter 9.      Snapshot: Airdrie and the Royal Commission  
                         on Religious Instruction.



Chapter 10. Symbolic Boundaries in Action: The Consolidation of Evangelicalism and Dissent in Airdrie, 1843-1880.

Chapter 11. No Promised Land: Airdrie and the ILP in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries.

Chapter 12. The Wind Bloweth Where It Listeth: The Diffusion of Evangelicalism in Late Nineteenth-Early Twentieth Century Airdrie.

Summary and Conclusion.

Bibliography.

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores the relationship between Evangelicalism and the Socialist Revival by way of a study of religion, community and culture in the Scottish town of Airdrie, 1790-1914. Chapter One presents an overview of Evangelicalism in the nineteenth century. The links between Evangelicalism and the Socialist Revival are discussed in Chapter Two where it is argued that Socialist Revivalism, especially as manifest by the Independent Labour Party, was a product of Evangelical-mission culture. Chapter Three looks at the development of Airdrie as a weaving community from the 1790s to 1820s, and Chapter Four examines the rôle of Evangelicalism and dissent in the construction of community and culture in weaving Airdrie. Chapters Five and Six outline the transformation of Airdrie from a weaving to an industrial town. As in introductory survey of the space that religion occupied in Airdrie from the 1820s, Chapter Seven paves the way for detailed examination, in Chapters Eight and Nine, of the continuing importance of Evangelicalism and dissent in shaping community and culture at Airdrie during the 1830s and 1840s. Chapter Ten considers the impact of the Disruption and of the 1859 revival in Airdrie, and suggests that these events consolidated the burgh's Evangelical Protestant and dissenting identity. Chapter Eleven outlines the development of Airdrie during the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries and examines the efforts of the ILP to establish a foothold in the town. It is argued that the failure of the ILP in Airdrie was as much a consequence of the embeddedness of Evangelicalism and dissent in local culture as of party political or organisational weakness. Chapter Twelve brings this argument to a conclusion through a consideration of the diffusion of Evangelicalism throughout Airdrie's rich associational culture. It is suggested that because the ILP was competing in Airdrie as just one more Evangelical-revivalist organisation against other, older, better-established Evangelical organisations, its progress was hindered. There was no room for it in Airdrie's Evangelical-mission culture.

# **DECLARATION**

This thesis has been composed by me. It has not been accepted in any previous degree. All quotations have been distinguished and the sources of information acknowledged.

Michael A McCabe April, 1992

## Tables

1. Occupational Status of Families in New Monkland Parish, 1821-1831.
- 2, Occupational Status of Males, Twenty Years and  
2A-2G Above, in New Monkland Parish and Airdrie, 1831.
3. Domestic Class. Airdrie 1861.
4. Industrial Classes. Airdrie, 1861.
5. Domestic Class, Order 4. Airdrie, 1861.
6. Industrial Class, Order 11. Airdrie, 1861.
7. Industrial Class, Order 15. Airdrie, 1861.
8. Sittings, Seats Let, Average Attendances in Airdrie Churches, 1836.
9. Airdrie Ministers' Stipends and Social Origins, 1836.
10. Baptisms in Wellwynd Church, Airdrie, 1841-1843.
11. Attendances at Airdrie Protestant Churches, 1876.
12. Attendances at Coatbridge Protestant Churches, 1876: Coatbridge and Airdrie Compared.
13. Communicant Membership of Presbyterian Churches in Airdrie, 1881-1911.
14. Baptisms in South Bridge Street UF Church, 1900-1917.

### Maps

Frontpiece      Parish of New Monkland. 1st Edition OS  
(Index), 1864.

1.    New Monkland Parish from Ross's Lanark, 1773.
2.    Wood's Plan of the Burgh of Airdrie, 1825.
3.    Airdrie Parliamentary Burgh, 1832.
4.    Airdrie Burgh. 1st Edition OS, 1864.
5.    Airdrie Burgh. OS 6" Lanark, 1899.

### Chart

Airdrie Churches in the Nineteenth Century.

---

Maps 1-5, and Chart are located at the back of the thesis.

## PREFACE

Religion, Culture, Society - these three cannot easily be separated and I am under no illusions about the conceptual, intellectual and practical difficulties involved when discussing the impact of each on the other, as I have tried to do in this thesis. Nevertheless, the attempt has to be made, even at the risk of over-simplifying, for it is the business of the historian of religions to try to make some sense of the awesome, confusing and sometimes chaotic impact of religion on humanity, and humanity on religion.

The painstaking processes of research and the imaginative effort required to produce a sustained piece of historical writing - and history's third dimension is always fiction - should not be understated. But they should not be exaggerated either. It would be wrong of me to claim that any long days of unproductive labour and nights devoid of ease have not been far outweighed by the pleasure of thinking, reading, writing and talking about the history of religions.

In opting for a reinterpretation of some conventional theories on the links between Evangelicalism and Socialist Revivalism, and for a local case study, I have been conscious of the temptation to make theory fit the local example, of the dangers of generalising from the particular, and also of the difficulties of achieving

balance between the local and national stories. Where I have thought it important to give weight to national events I have done so because people at local level were conscious of belonging to the larger nation. However, this is not to suggest that what was happening at national level dictated local behaviour because, of course, national events were lived through locally.

A local study over a long timespan poses numerous problems in the area of sources. I have by no means exhausted the available or potential sources for recreating Airdrie's religion, culture and society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Rather, I have tried to draw on a representative selection of materials in order to indicate the variety and richness of the local history seam. Airdrie Public Library's Local History Room, with its invaluable collection of archives including the Airdrie Advertiser and other local newspapers on microfilm, has been a key starting-point. However, much of the miscellaneous material here is in the process of being conserved, sorted and classified. Lack of funds - and lack of public interest - are likely to make this task a long one and in the meantime the prospector must be prepared to carry out much heavy spadework and to exercise considerable patience.

Airdrie Library does not have much in the way of local churches' records and the best starting-point for these is

the Scottish Records Office which has a good sample readily available. The Mitchell Library's Glasgow Room and its Strathclyde Regional Archive can also yield valuable Airdrie nuggets now and again though admittedly this requires the same determined optimism that one displays while panning at Wanlockhead in November. Mitchell Library also has many newspapers, journals and magazines from the West of Scotland, including Labour Leader and Forward.

Sadly, Scottish ILP and Labour Party records are hard to come by in spite of the efforts of Ian MacDougall and others of the Scottish Labour History Society to encourage every Labour organisation in Scotland to transfer its older records into a safe repository where preservation can be assured.

No PhD thesis is ever the work of one person and indeed, there is something slightly dishonest and misleading in the expression "my thesis". I owe an enormous debt to many people. Though their contributions are for the most part invisible, without their counsel and help, material and otherwise, this particular thesis would not exist.

Especial thanks, then, to: the staff of Airdrie Public Library and Mrs Elaine Clifford (Local History Library); Dunfermline Public Library and Penny Maplesden (Local History Library); Edinburgh University Library; Mitchell Library, Glasgow; New College Library, Edinburgh; National



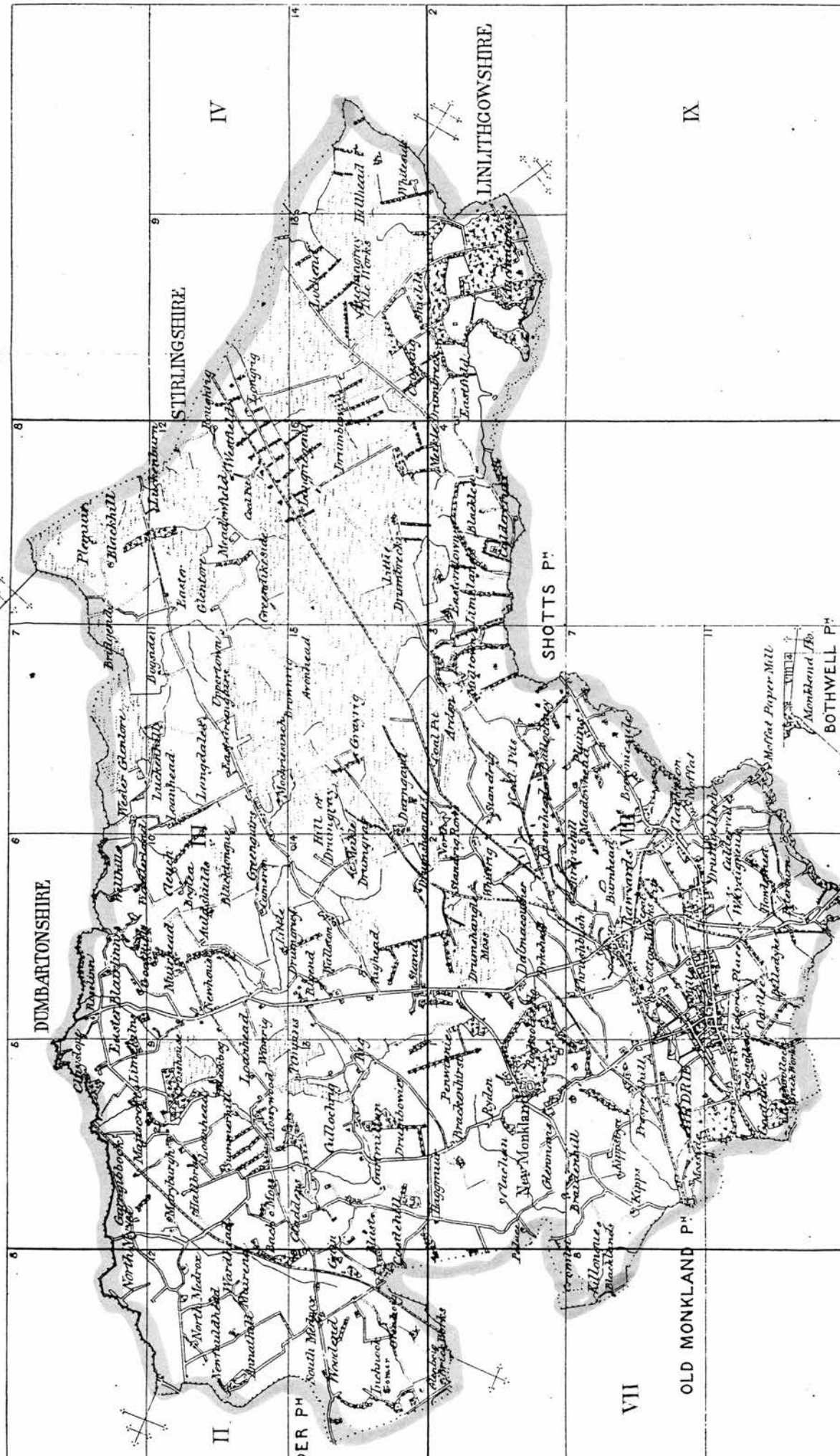
Library and National Library Annexe, Edinburgh; Dr K C Carter (Computers); Ruth Michell (Typing); Jean McNab (Proofs); Dr Andrew Ross (Supervisor, New College); Professor Andrew Walls (Magister, Centre for Christianity in the Non-Western World, New College) and, above all, to my parents to whom this thesis is dedicated.

### Abbreviations

ASB	Airdrie Savings Bank.
EU	Evangelical Union.
FES	Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae.
GFP	Glasgow Free Press.
HWJ	History Workshop Journal.
ILP	Independent Labour Party.
IOGT	Independent Order of Good Templars.
IRSH	International Review of Social History.
LRC	Labour Representation Committee.
NBDM	North British Daily Mail.
OS	Ordnance Survey.
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party.
PP	Parliamentary Papers.
PSA	Pleasant Sunday Afternoon.
QS	Quoad Sacra.
RP	Reformed Presbyterian.
RPH	Records of the Presbytery of Hamilton.
RSCHS	Records of the Scottish Church History Society.
SRO	Scottish Records Office.
UF	United Free.
UP	United Presbyterian.

"history is that impossible thing: the attempt to give an account, with incomplete knowledge, of actions themselves undertaken with incomplete knowledge. So that it teaches us no short cuts to Salvation, no recipe for a New World, only the dogged and patient art of making do... by for ever attempting to explain we may come, not to an Explanation, but to a knowledge of the limits of our power to explain. Yes, Yes, the past gets in the way; it trips us up, bogs us down; it complicates, makes difficult. But to ignore this is folly because, above all, what history teaches us is to avoid illusion and make-believe, to lay aside dreams, moonshine, cure alls, wonder-workings, pie-in-the-sky - to be realistic."

(Graham Swift, Waterland)



SURVEYED BY MAJOR BAYLY R. E.

Published in 30 Sheets at 2½ each, and 2, VIII. 6 & 10. at 4 each

## INTRODUCTION

The accepted view of the relationship between Evangelicalism and the Socialist Revival in late nineteenth-early twentieth century Britain is that while Evangelicalism influenced the style and methods of Socialist Revivalism it was otherwise of superficial importance. Socialist Revivalism should not be understood in conventional Evangelical terms. The Socialist Revival, and the Labour prophecy that it produced, was only a transitional phase in the inevitable rise of a secular Socialist ideology and the development of a secular Labour Party. Socialist Revivalism gave expression to a new ideology that was not a child of Evangelicalism. Indeed, the Socialist Revival or "Religion of Socialism" helped to wean the working classes from Evangelicalism, which was the hallmark of hegemonic bourgeois ideology. It marked the transfer of social energy from religion to politics.

In this thesis I take a different view. My purpose is to argue for a reinterpretation of the relationship between Evangelicalism and the Socialist Revival, and to give proper emphasis to the religious context within which Socialist Revivalism, especially as manifest in the Independent Labour Party (ILP), grew and developed. A reinterpretation and an emphasis on religious context are necessary because the view of relationship between

Evangelicalism and Socialist Revivalism, as outlined above, is deeply flawed, for four main reasons:

First, it is based on a failure to appreciate that the Socialist Revival cannot be understood outwith the context of nineteenth century Evangelicalism.

Second, it rests on a too rigid, too simple equation between, on the one hand, Evangelicalism, individualism and individual salvation, and between Socialist Revivalism, collectivism and social salvation on the other. Thus, Evangelicalism and Socialist Revivalism are portrayed as locked in ideological conflict and ultimately irreconcilable.

Third, it exaggerates the pace of the secularisation process in nineteenth century Britain's emerging urban, industrial society and therefore understates the role of religion in shaping new industrial communities.

Fourth, it overstates the secular character of the Socialist Revival in order to show that Socialism was a new ideology not born of religion.

I will argue that the sine qua non of Socialist Revivalism and the Gospel of the ILP from 1893 to 1914 was Evangelical Protestantism.

Evangelicalism was the context within which late nineteenth century British Socialism had been nourished. Evangelical-mission culture informed not only the style and methods of ILP propaganda but also its content and values. Above all, Evangelicalism shaped the Weltanschauung of the early ILP. Socialist Revivalism as embodied in the ILP is and was recognisable as a point on the continuum of Evangelical religion that stretched from academic theology and ecclesiastical politics to popular revivalism and millenarianism.

The various strands of Socialist Revivalism in general, ranging from Fabian gradualism to the Marxism of the Social Democratic Federation, were rooted in a Judeo-Christian view of purposive history; Socialist history was heilsgeschichte. The weight of historical inevitability assured Socialists, ILPers no less than Marxists, that the working classes must and would triumph over the dark forces of capitalism. A New Age was imminent. Not surprisingly, Socialist millenarianism was viewed with fear and suspicion by the mainstream churches in much the same way and for the same reasons as popular millenarianism had been treated between 1780 and 1850.<sup>1</sup>

In Scotland, Evangelicalism bore the distinctive marks of the Scottish Reformation inheritance and in turn the ILP bore the imprint of Scottish Evangelicalism. The Scottish churches were worried by the Socialist Revivalism of the

ILP because it threatened to steal the Evangelical initiative. Indeed, the ILP itself claimed that it was replacing the churches in the task of building the New Jerusalem. The ILP did not simply offer an alternative outlet for working class commitment and enthusiasm. It claimed the cure of souls.

By way of an historical survey of the growth and development of Evangelicalism in the Scottish town of Airdrie in Lanarkshire from 1790 to 1914, I put my hypothesis to the test.

The core of the thesis consists of a study of religion and the construction of community in Airdrie and assesses the impact of the Evangelical legacy on the potential fortunes of the ILP. It is contended that the failure of the party to achieve any success of note in Airdrie down to 1914 was a consequence of the embeddedness, flexibility, continuing vitality and diffusion of Evangelical and dissenting values. The survival and strength of the Evangelical-dissenting outlook in the late nineteenth century burgh was a result of the triumphant progress of Evangelicalism and dissent, and of their key role in moulding community and culture, during the critical, turbulent period from 1790 to 1850.

After 1850 the Airdrie churches and their umbrella organisations benefitted from the organisational, cultural



and symbolic investment of Evangelicalism in community, an investment which the ILP could not match and was unable to cash-in on.

The Socialist Revivalists of the late nineteenth-early twentieth century thought that the weight of history was on their side. But in Airdrie, ironically, the weight of history, especially the success of Evangelicalism and dissent between 1790 and 1850, worked against Socialist Revivalism. The failure of the ILP in Airdrie cannot be understood by limiting our attention to the decades from 1880 to 1914.

By considering the impact of Evangelicalism on a community in the throes of industrial revolution we will see that religion, as much as socio-economic change, contributed to the demise of Airdrie's association with an older, pre-industrial parish community and to the growth of a new and distinctive Airdrie identity. In other words, the social and economic transformation of Airdrie from farm-toun to weaving village to industrial-commercial town will be placed in the context of, and seen against, emerging Evangelicalism on the basis that it is extremely difficult to postulate a one directional determinism, with religious change always and only a reflection of socio-economic change.

Evangelicalism and dissent came to exercise a dominant role in community and culture in Airdrie and Evangelicalism was the matrix within which community as culture operated. Together, Evangelicalism and dissent governed Airdrie people's attitudes to each other and to the outside world. Evangelicalism and dissent were reference points for social analysis and social criticism, provided a cutting edge for radicalism, and were potent influences on and expressions of popular religious consciousness and culture. Since the Socialist Revivalism of the ILP was itself a product of Evangelical culture and not just of rising working class consciousness, New Unionism and disaffection with radical Liberalism, its failure in Airdrie down to 1914 must be seen as a religio-cultural problem in which the town's distinctive Evangelical Protestant identity was of paramount importance. By the late nineteenth century Evangelicalism was so deeply embedded in Airdrie that it was difficult for the ILP to establish any firm footing - and in a town where the ILP considered the majority of people to be its natural constituents.

It was not until after the dislocations of the First World War and the appearance of manhood suffrage in 1918 that cracks appeared in Airdrie's Evangelical dissenting culture that were wide enough for the reorganised and quite different Labour Party to exploit. After 1914 it was a different world both for the churches and for Socialist Revivalism and the ILP.

From the example of Airdrie a more general thesis will be advanced; namely, that because the Socialist Revivalism of the ILP was a point on the continuum of nineteenth century Evangelicalism in localities where there were potential religious bases of support for the party and spaces in religious culture into which it could move, the ILP stood a reasonable chance of success. However, it had to have both religious bases and spaces. In places where it did not have both its advance was hindered. As just another Evangelical organisation, there was often no room for it. The ILP displayed an ambivalent attitude towards individualism. This was a further reflection of its roots in Evangelicalism for Evangelicalism had always been highly ambivalent in its approach to individualism. The ILP's demands for individuals' conversion to Socialism were not always distinct or novel enough to attract support especially in localities where Evangelicalism was deeply embedded in community and culture. In such places the ILP's Evangelical message, missionary techniques and outlook, and spiritual values hardly constituted a new ideology. Those people who were most likely to support it were often members of the churches, temperance societies and other organisations bound up with Evangelical culture. Among such people and organisations Socialist Revivalism had to compete for individuals' support as only one option.

Since the 1970s there has been an increasing number of studies of Socialist Revivalism and the growth of the ILP. For the most part, however, these studies explore the links between the ILP, the trades unions and party politics. They have a tendency to assume that political culture and religious culture may overlap but are nevertheless distinct or even mutually exclusive spheres. Political and economic descriptions and analyses of the rise of Labour predominate. Religion is acknowledged as being of some importance but there is a marked reluctance to say more than this for fear that otherwise the force of the political arguments might be weakened.

David Howell in his study British Workers and the Independent Labour Party (1888-1906) has explored both the trade union bases of the ILP and the spaces in late Victorian political culture into which the party could move and grow.<sup>2</sup> He has argued that any analysis of a political organisation's growth cannot begin with a study of its formal structures alone. Rather, we must start by examining at regional and local level possible bases of support. In the case of the ILP this involves looking at the links between the party and trades unions. Moreover, the study of possible trade union bases must be complemented by "an assessment of the scope available in various communities for a new political organisation."<sup>3</sup>

This means we must explore the relationship between the ILP and late Victorian political culture, particularly Liberalism.

Howell has paid little attention to the role of religion in the growth and development of the ILP. He has made no attempt to discuss either the possible religious bases of ILP support or the spaces in religious culture into which the party could move.

The neglect of religion in Howell's work would not be a cause for complaint were it not for the fact that he has repeated the familiar image of the early ILP propagandists as "missionaries" braving apathy and hostility, buoyed up by optimism and concerned with the broad advocacy of ethical principles rather than the minutiae of political dealings. This image, Howell thinks, is sentimental and beguiling, and was one to which hard-pressed ILPers

"would resort with longing during later difficulties. This retrospective vision was cultivated assiduously by later ILP publicists as part of the creation of a party style. It was all the more effective for being based on a significant element of truth."<sup>4</sup>

Yet precisely because the missionary image was based on "a significant element of truth" it was more than sentimental and not wholly retrospective. The only way that the missionary images and Evangelicalism of the ILP can be understood is to locate them in the religious context to

which they refer. Studies of the ILP that are restricted to examination of possible trade union bases, and spaces in political culture into which the party could move are unlikely to reveal the key importance of religion in ILP fortunes, both as a source of strength and of weakness.

K D Wald has argued that religion was the major electoral factor in British elections from 1885 to 1910.<sup>5</sup> He thinks that religious groups, both nationally and regionally, transmitted distinctive political orientations which affected the behaviour of their adherents in supposedly secular situations. Social class played an important but secondary role to religion in its capacity to structure the vote. Whether one agrees with Wald or not he is certainly right to point out that his conclusions run against the grain of traditional social scientific research on the political consequences of religion.

"Suspicious of theories which assign independent causal power to ideas or cultural norms, scholars have been reluctant to accept models that posit a direct link between religion and political values. Even when a demonstrable congruence between religious attitudes and political behaviour is apparent, there is a suspicion that religious ideas are no more than post-hoc rationalizations employed to legitimate behaviour whose origins are likely to have a material basis."<sup>6</sup>

Although Wald has focused his attention on voter alignments he has moved some way towards widening the analysis by treating the role of values inspired by religion as politically influential variables. He has used a loose

phenomenological approach to religion which favours greater emphasis on religion as a form of human endeavour and activity. By examining the world views disseminated by the major denominations Wald has attempted to penetrate the nature of religious influence on politics, and by emphasising the notion of dissemination he has suggested that religion was not limited to people within the churches. He has concluded that late nineteenth century British political culture can best be described as religio-political.

J P Parry has taken this view a stage further and has argued that during the 1860s and 1870s in particular, politics cannot be understood if it is treated merely as a secular activity

"for most politicians, politics had a religious dimension;... for vast numbers of voters, it [politics] was conceived as an activity of significance mainly because religious issues were so prominent... for both politicians and writers on the one hand and for voters on the other, the importance of religion was not appreciated primarily in terms of the secular consequences that might follow from extending its hold... the main consideration in men's minds was that religion offered an inspiring and awful conception of their place in the order of things."<sup>7</sup>

Parry and Wald have drawn attention to the dangers of overlaying analyses of the nineteenth century with late twentieth century views of society. In different ways, each suggests that the pace of secularisation has been

exaggerated and the depth of the penetration of religion  
in nineteenth century culture underestimated.



### Notes

1. See: J F C Harrison, The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism, 1780-1850, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1979.
2. David Howell, British Workers And the Independent Labour Party, 1888-1906, Manchester University Press, 1983.
3. Ibid, p vii.
4. Ibid, p 2.
5. Kenneth D Wald, Crosses On the Ballot Box: Patterns of British Voter Alignment Since 1885, Princeton University Press, 1983.
6. Ibid, pp 163-4.
7. J P Parry, Democracy and Religion: Gladstone And the Liberal Party, 1867-1875, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p 5.

## CHAPTER ONE

### EVANGELICAL MISSION CULTURE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

"Onward, brothers, march still onward...  
Till ye reach the Promised Land."

(Chants of Labour, Sixth Edn, 1922 No 33)

#### The Evangelical Century

"In the beginning was Evangelicalism". This in essence is the line of argument advanced in the opening pages of G M Young's classic account of the creation of Victorian Britain. For Young, Evangelicalism was a directing force in early nineteenth century society. It was vital religion with a theology that was admirably suited to the pushy individualism of early Victorian entrepreneurs.

"The Evangelical discipline, secularized as respectability, was the strongest binding force in a nation which without it might have broken up, as it had already broken loose."<sup>1</sup>

Evangelicalism was a primary constituent in the Victorian frame of mind. From the mid-eighteenth century down to the First World War, the Evangelical movement was one of immense psychological and social power in the lives of individuals. Furthermore, the activism of the movement

enabled it to permeate all aspects of British society to the extent that society was remoulded.<sup>2</sup>

Evangelicalism mattered far outside the world of the institutional churches so much so that "The hundred years or so before the First World War... deserve to be called the Evangelical century."<sup>3</sup>

### Theological Foundations

Evangelical theology was characterised by a common core of ideas and practices which, as David Bebbington has shown, was remarkably consistent from the 1730s to 1914 and beyond. This common core comprised four qualities that formed a "quadrilateral of priorities": conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism.<sup>4</sup>

Evangelicals believed that conversion was the most important religious experience. It was the key cross over point from non-Christian to Christian. For the converted Christian, conversion of others was the goal of personal effort and the collective aim of the churches. Conversionism stressed the need for lives to be completely changed. This was to be brought about by effective preaching of the gospel.

Two theological convictions underpinned the belief in conversion: justification by faith, and assurance.

Human beings had become estranged from God by their sinfulness. There was nothing men could do by themselves to win salvation. Even good works were tainted by sin. Salvation had to be received from God as a gift, not achieved, and for this Jesus had to be trusted as Saviour. Acceptance of God came through faith alone.

At the point of conversion an individual not only received salvation as a gift. He or she was also assured that salvation had been granted. Evangelicals were Christians who knew that they were saved. Indeed, Bebbington has argued that one of the novelties of Evangelicalism was the claim that "blessed" assurance normally accompanies conversion.<sup>5</sup> The confidence of Evangelicals was rooted in their inward persuasion that God was on their side.

Evangelicals argued that the "lukewarmness" which came to dominate British Protestantism during the early decades of the eighteenth century had diminished the conversion imperative. They saw this diminution as a danger to the cause of true religion. Conversion should always be the hallmark of Christians - as much for those born in an officially Christian country as for those in non-Christian lands. Evangelicals argued that the spiritual laxity of the early eighteenth century meant that baptism,

superficially administered, was allowed to cover a multitude of sins. Conversion did not permit this to happen because it necessitated a new consciousness of sin, a conscious turning away from sin and a willing acceptance of Christ as the remover of the burden of sin. Consequently, conversion had to be an intensely individualistic experience, the result of which was a public and zealous commitment to Christ and the Church. Conversion had to be an inner change of heart and subsequent rebirth into a new life in Christ. The conversion experience was the badge of membership of the Church militant.

Although there was never agreement about the timing of conversion<sup>6</sup> - could it be gradual rather than sudden? - Evangelicals generally sought to achieve, and expected to hear of an immediate experience. There was debate too over the means of conversion.<sup>7</sup> Orthodox teaching emphasised that conversion was the work of the Holy Spirit, but many Evangelicals thought it was also dependent on an individual's will to be saved. The centrality of conversion could also be a source of theological controversy because it conflicted with Christian teaching on baptism, a sacrament which was itself the occasion of birth into new life in Christ.<sup>8</sup>

Evangelical activism flowed directly from conversionism. Throughout the nineteenth century the strength of

Evangelicalism rested on large numbers of dedicated lay people who through Sunday schools, missions, philanthropy and in their daily lives worked to spread the gospel. Moreover, the Evangelical movement transformed the role and attitude of ministers. They were encouraged to be up and doing, and to identify, and identify with the spiritual interests of their people.

The Bible was the primary source of spiritual truth that activism was meant to spread. Inspired by God, the Bible was the supreme rule of faith and life, and through preaching and prayer it was the main channel of grace. However, Evangelicalism tended to favour fluidity rather than infallibility in ideas about the effects of inspiration on the Bible text for the overriding aim was to bring home the message of scripture and to encourage its devotional use, not to develop a doctrine of scripture.<sup>9</sup> At the heart of Evangelical biblicism was the message of the cross.

Through Christ's death on Calvary humanity had been reconciled with God. Christ was an atonement for sin; He had died as a substitute for sinful people. Evangelicals were profoundly grateful for Calvary and it was this gratitude which lay behind their desire and quest for sanctification.<sup>10</sup> But belief in the Atonement could be the occasion for disputes in Evangelical ranks. During the eighteenth century the movement was divided between

Methodists who were Arminian and most others, who were Calvinist. However, by the beginning of the nineteenth century this debate was dying down. Most Evangelicals came to rest content with a moderate Calvinism which in terms of pulpit instruction differed only slightly from the Methodist version of Arminianism.<sup>11</sup>

Evangelicals, inspired and confident in the assurance of salvation, regarded good works as essential proof of salvation but not as a claim to it. "Faith alone" as a theological battle-cry was, when coupled with an emphasis on God as no less just and judicial than loving and benevolent, central to the Evangelical dynamic for it enabled actions to be taken without fear of consequences. Evangelicalism focused attention on the Immanence of God. He was felt to be intensely and immediately present in the affairs of mankind. The Holy Spirit moved in mysterious but also tangible ways. Christ as saviour was directly and personally knowable, intervening, working through history and omnipotent. Without God's help human beings could do nothing. And what was on offer to people was freedom, especially from the burden and wages of sin.

As a package such theological convictions had powerful implications for Evangelicals in their dealings with the world. Evangelicalism offered church members, lay people, ministers and congregations the opportunity for active work in the Church, and through the Church in the world. Thus,

although highly individualistic, Evangelicalism was also outward-looking, social, associative, organisational and communal.

#### Integration - and Diversity: Scottish Evangelicalism

Callum Brown has argued that after 1707 just as Scotland's economic development fell into step with that of England so also did the social experience of Scottish religion.<sup>12</sup> The Scottish churches encountered the same social consequences of agricultural and industrial change, population growth and urbanisation as the churches in England. Economic transformation and the emergence of organised political parties and social movements occurred within a British framework. Scottish responses to social problems were part and parcel of the development throughout Britain of permissive welfare legislation and of philanthropy. It is crucial argues Brown, "to place the social history of modern Scottish religion within this unfolding British experience."<sup>13</sup>

The differences between Scottish and English religion were progressively diminished as the nineteenth century wore on, and Evangelicalism in Scotland was part of the trend towards incorporation of the Scottish churches into British life.<sup>14</sup> Evangelicalism in Scotland coincided with the rise of Evangelicalism and Methodism in England, and was similar in religious temper and social appeal. From the 1730s



there arose a unity of interests among Evangelicals north and south of the border exemplified in exchange of preachers, joint campaigns and cooperation in the promotion of foreign and home missions.<sup>15</sup> This Evangelical interchange functioned like a religious Zollverein and became a major feature of British ecclesiastical life. Evangelicalism shaped initiatives to reform industrial society and to eradicate immorality and religious indifference by promoting godliness through churchgoing.<sup>16</sup> Until at least the mid-nineteenth century, the Evangelical approach to social problems was widely accepted in British governing circles as the basis of public social policy.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, from the mid-nineteenth century the influence of Evangelicalism was strengthened by "the framework of social dichotomies"<sup>18</sup> - increasing class consciousness, class division and the social segregation of classes - which became characteristic of British towns and cities, to the extent that solutions to problems proposed by Evangelicals were equally applicable in London, Birmingham or Glasgow. An essential conformity of method and practice evolved throughout Britain and the Evangelical movement

"straddled the Protestant life of the nation to dominate as the aggressive face of industrial Christianity."<sup>19</sup>

However, Brown has over-emphasised both the pace and depth of the incorporation of the Scottish churches and, more

importantly, the role of Evangelicalism in the incorporation process. Evangelicalism produced a conformity of method and practice but it did not result in a completely uniform British religious culture. In Scotland, Evangelicalism was, in a number of key respects, distinctively Scottish. Keith Robbins has pointed out that while at one level Christianity underpinned the integrity of the British State, and while there was a convergence of the social experience of churches in Britain, at another level the fractured condition of Christianity meant that the churches expressed and reinforced diversity within Britain.

"'British Christianity' was an artificial construct without institutional foundations. Consciously or not, the various churches of England, Scotland and Wales were all 'carriers' of traditions which they believed to be deeply embedded in the spiritual life of their people."<sup>20</sup>

Evangelicalism encouraged and thrived on this diversity.

Crucially, Scottish Evangelicals' historical frame of reference was quite different from that of their English or Welsh comrades in arms. In the Scottish context, Evangelicals reasserted the theological, political and cultural distinctiveness of the Scottish Reformation inheritance and via this inheritance the doctrines of the Early Church - at least in so far as these had been interpreted by Knox and Melville. And the Scottish Reformation had indeed been different, nowhere more so than

in the vexed question of polity. The conservative form of polity retained by the post-Reformation Church of England was determined, in the main, by the Crown which did not want any irrevocable break with the past. In Scotland

"a differing political situation had enabled a more radical type of Church organisation to come into being, a polity which... was ...moulded not on the example of England or of the Lutheran countries, but rather on that of the 'best Reformed churches' of Switzerland and France."<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, not only had the Scottish Reformation been carried out in opposition to the Crown, it had also asserted the belief in

"an autonomous ecclesiastical jurisdiction in no sense exercised at the discretion of the civil power or indeed of any earthly authority."<sup>22</sup>

These were traditions which died hard and they were not defunct or irrelevant by the nineteenth century. On the contrary, they were revived by Scottish Evangelicals both within and outside the Established Church. The Scottish Reformation, the Covenanters of the 1630s and 1680s, and the Westminster Confession loomed large in Scottish Evangelical imagination - much more so than in English dissent. Indeed, the nature of dissent in both countries was quite different because the religious Establishments were different. Thus while Thomas Chalmers' lectures on Church and State (1838)<sup>23</sup> were admired by his London audiences as an articulate and staunch defence of the

Establishment principle, Chalmers was certainly not advocating the restoration of episcopacy in Scotland. Evangelicalism fostered a renewed interest in Scottish religious traditions and in the idea of the Scottish nation as one supposedly less hierarchic and more democratic than England.

As a grouping within the Established Church of Scotland Evangelicals rose to particular prominence under Chalmers' leadership in the 1830s. But this group had been preceded in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by a growing number of Evangelical defections from the Established Church ostensibly caused by the Church's relations with the state and the operation of patronage. However, the disputes that led to these secessions from the Establishment had been on-going since the sixteenth century. They were not new in themselves although the social and economic context was. An emphasis on continuity is important in order to offset some of the more extreme claims made by Callum Brown who argues that religious schism and dissent, and indeed Evangelicalism were "signs" of changing social and economic circumstances rather than religious per se.<sup>24</sup> In Scotland, disputes about Church-State relations and about patronage were always much more than the product of changing economic relations. Church government lay at the heart of popular religious consciousness. In particular, church government in

Presbyterian dominated Scotland was hierophanic to an unusual degree.

It has been fashionable since the 1960s for social historians of religion to seek to uncover an allegedly popular religious consciousness which was submerged by, and at variance with mainstream or dominant religious traditions. Mainstream religion is known about because its followers were largely from the articulate classes. Popular traditions by contrast are hidden because they were largely the preserve of the uneducated and inarticulate classes. Broadly, this is the line pursued in, for example, Christopher Hill's work on radical Protestantism in the English Revolution<sup>25</sup> and to a lesser degree by J F C Harrison in his analysis of millenarianism in Britain from 1780-1850.<sup>26</sup> There are few studies on Scotland specifically to compare with Hill or Harrison but this is partly because in Scotland mainstream Protestantism and, by the later seventeenth century, Presbyterianism in particular was an expression of popular religious consciousness. Certainly there were also other popular traditions submerged (and suppressed) by dominant Presbyterian culture but people could, and did, adhere to such traditions at the same time as they held to mainstream Presbyterianism. The "Great" and "Little" traditions could complement one another and were not necessarily in opposition.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Evangelicalism was itself a popular revolt against the cultured elitism of Moderatism.

Everything that Evangelical dissenters and later, Established Church Evangelicals decried as spiritual laxity or caused by it, was summed-up in pejorative use of the term "Moderate". Spreading northwards from England in the years following the ignominious Jacobite risings, "lukewarmness" in religion conjoined with the Scottish Enlightenment - which was not shared with England<sup>28</sup>- and took a firm hold among influential landlords and their ministers. The rise of a Moderate Party in the Established Church from 1750 to the early 1800s tempered the more rigorous demands of Predestinarian Calvinist theology in favour of Christian Stoicism, civic humanism, Whig-conservatism and Enlightenment values.<sup>29</sup> Reason, refinement, philosophy and social conservatism guarded against excessive religious enthusiasm which, according to Moderate thinking, had blighted the religious life of the nation in the seventeenth century.

However, though Evangelicalism was a protest against this Moderatism there were clear lines of continuity between the two. These continuities only make sense when we recognise that Evangelicals in Scotland were reacting against a distinctively Scottish Moderatism. The Moderates had moved away from rigid Calvinism but they were neither deists nor sceptics. As Richard Sher has shown, the collective ideology of Moderatism cannot be understood outside the context of eighteenth century Scottish Presbyterianism.

The rational, polite form of Presbyterianism that Moderates espoused was intended to

"bridge the gap between John Knox and David Hume, between fanaticism and infidelity, between tradition and modernity."<sup>30</sup>

Moderates thought and worked within a

"thoroughly Presbyterian framework and remained loyal and active members of their national Church despite their other interests and activities."<sup>31</sup>

They did not, for example, abandon church discipline. Rather, as an essentially conservative group, they tended to stress that authority, discipline and subordination were particularly important in a Presbyterian church.<sup>32</sup>

Furthermore, loyalty to the Established Church of Scotland was not only socially and politically conservative it was also a function of Moderates' strongly nationalist leanings. Generally speaking Moderate nationalism

"was expressed quietly, through gentle boasting about the excellence of Scottish institutions and intellectual achievements."<sup>33</sup>

But it could be overt and belligerent as in the Scots Militia campaign <sup>34</sup> and the Ossian controversy.<sup>35</sup>



With respect to church discipline and nationalism the Evangelicals of the Established Church - and indeed, dissenting Evangelicals - had more in common with the Moderates than either party cared to admit. The Evangelicals believed that under Moderate rule the power of the Church had been weakened by a too close relationship with the State and the World. The Church's role in shaping both had become less potent than the worldliness that was shaping the Church. Worse, the Church was betraying signs of Erastianism, a situation which was intolerable for Evangelicals who looked to The Second Book of Discipline and the National Covenant as key documents in the development of Presbyterian polity. The Church's relations with the state and with the secular world became the focus of Evangelical criticism of Moderatism. Indeed, the Evangelicals built on Moderate views of the authority of the Church and extended them to reassert the autonomous jurisdiction of the Church in matters spiritual - which included patronage since this involved the appointment of ministers.

Nevertheless, Evangelicals, whether within or outside the Establishment, were not exempt from the dilemma of how to remain in the World but not of it. One of the most important features of Evangelical culture was a blurring of the distinction between the religious world and the secular world. Church-State relations were only one aspect of a much wider field of vision. Although both dissenting



and Established Evangelicals sought to define rigidly the respective responsibilities of the Church (as the body of Christ) and the State (as the national legal order under God), their theology of Immanence did not allow for a similar rigidity in distinguishing between religion and society. God had created the world and no individual or institutions could operate without Him. It was the responsibility of the Church to ensure that secular institutions did not depart from God's purposes as described in Scripture. Any aspect of society which did so had to be brought back into line by the Church. Not only all men and women but all institutions of secular society had to be converted. Consequently, Evangelicals claimed that the Church gave people a power in its work which no other institution could wield. The Church made demands on all of its members which no other institution could make. And for these demands to be put into practice the Word needed incarnation in ministers, lay-people, buildings and an enormous range and quantity of sub-organisations. Evangelicalism emphasised the integrity of a divinely created world and struggled to remove evil or profane influences which constantly threatened that integrity. What distinguished Evangelical activism from Moderate activism was an emphatic statement of the Church as an instrument in its own right - not of the State - and one whose primary function was the transformation, through sanctification, of the whole of society. The Church had to determine the content and course of this transformation.

In Scottish Evangelicalism there was a strong theocratic element in the various solutions to the dilemma of working in, through and for the world (without being corrupted by it) that were tried.

Presbyterian dissenters opted for severance from the Establishment. Only this way, they argued, could the Church be free to pursue its goals without interference from the State.

By contrast, for Thomas Chalmers the solution was to be found in a rejuvenation of the Calvinist Godly Commonwealth ideal. Here, the State was in partnership - though always the lesser partner - with the Church. The State had a God-ordained duty to provide the framework, legal and financial, within which the Church could freely operate.

The younger Established Church Evangelicals of the 1820s and '30s, led by R S Candlish, in general supported Chalmers' social bond philosophy but took it a step further. They were impatient for the Godly Commonwealth, less deferential and more contemptuous of old-fashioned compromise. The Church, they believed, must have coercive powers over the State both when the State was dragging its feet and when national spiritual decay demanded it. Indeed, the younger Evangelicals played an important part in pushing a sickly Chalmers down pathways which he had not meant to follow. For Candlish, Begg, Guthrie, Cunningham

and the other "Angry Young Men" of the Established Church in the 1830s there were two kingdoms but Christ was emphatically ruler of both.

In each and all of these solutions it was dedication to the Church as instrument that was the driving force. And central to this view of the Church was the concept of aggressive mission. Vigorously put into play from the late eighteenth century, by the later nineteenth century mission had lodged itself in the popular imagination as a hallmark of Evangelicalism. Mission became a way of thinking about the world and of seeking the world's transformation.

Moreover, Evangelicals in Scotland proved themselves to be skilful manipulators of "the ways of the world" in the interests of mission. The conduct of dissenters and Established Churchmen during the Voluntary Controversy and the Ten Years Conflict provide ample illustrations of this point. Evangelicals were not ascetics, not critical of worldliness per se but of the kind of worldliness exhibited by Moderatism. They favoured a more aggressive use of the ways of the world for the benefit of the Church and the building of Christ's Kingdom on earth, immediately. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to place undue emphasis on the abrasive or puritanical strands which ran through Evangelicalism. Among dissenters and within the Established Church, Evangelicals were not homogeneous and many were more comfortable with the Tory paternalism of a

Chalmers than with the fiery rhetoric of the "wildmen" of the Church of Scotland. Furthermore, a theology which stresses Immanence must always strike a fine balance between what is "good", and therefore legitimate worldliness, and what "bad". Precisely because the line is so fine and the boundaries hazy, Evangelicals seemed at times to encourage and practise double-standards of morality, public and private. But as Geoffrey Best has suggested, hypocrisy was often more apparent than real. It was rather a failure to live up to high ideals.<sup>36</sup> Besides, the undoubted existence of some hypocrisy was "a sign of the Evangelical achievement in setting new standards of behaviour".<sup>37</sup>

Evangelicalism was the framework within which the Protestant churches of Britain operated during the nineteenth century but it never gave institutional form to a "British Christianity". Evangelicalism reinforced diversity. It allowed the Scottish churches to stand against the tide of political integration into the British State which increasing power of central government at Westminster implied. Scottish Evangelicalism was distinctive. It revitalised Scotland's Reformation inheritance and the vigour of Presbyterianism, and challenged the Erastian and secularising tendencies of the British Parliament.

## The Rise and Fall of Evangelicalism in Nineteenth Century Scotland

During the eighteenth century, argues Brown, the Church of Scotland had come to embody the principles and values of the landed classes - patronage, social deference and power vested in heritable property. However, in the emerging industrial and urban society of the nineteenth century a new social system based on competition, self-help and status acquired through hard work was coming to the fore. This new social order was dominated by the urban middle classes who were prosperous, opportunistic and demanded political recognition and equality. More importantly, the urban middle classes brought to the churches

"an aggressive and enthusiastic commitment which conflicted with the rural elite's stress on religion as a sedate instrument of government. The cities were transforming ideas about what religion should be."<sup>38</sup>

The distinguishing feature in the social identity of the new middle classes was Evangelicalism. This was not a theological system but "a framework of response to the emergence of modern urban society."<sup>39</sup>

Evangelicalism was not limited to any one denomination or to the middle classes but the middle classes, as a broad and united social elite, "were masters of its

development".<sup>40</sup> From the 1780s to the 1880s, Evangelicalism dominated middle class attitudes to urban civilisation. It was a call to action "in the name of God, the economy and the individual".<sup>41</sup> Thomas Chalmers' church extension campaign for the Established Church, and the spectacular growth of dissenting churches were aspects of this new bourgeois religion.

However, Evangelicalism, Brown has argued, provided

"an overarching moral and religious interpretation of the cities social problems which, from the Evangelical point of view, were all interrelated products of spiritual failure of the individual. The failure to strive for and gain the assured salvation awaiting everyone who 'came to Christ' induced idleness, lack of worldly success, and a whole host of moral shortcomings."<sup>42</sup>

To combat such shortcomings Evangelicalism spawned a vast range of agencies, aimed chiefly at the working classes. Sunday schools, tract societies, temperance organisations, savings banks, lodging houses, workmen's housing societies, and a plethora of benevolent and charitable societies. Moreover, agencies became refined according to occupation, age and sex. There were railwaymen's missions, missions to fishermen, Bands of Hope, Boys Brigade, Girls' Guildry and so on. This, indeed, was "piety as programme"<sup>43</sup> inspired by the impulse to Christianise the nation. Local congregations were encouraged by higher church courts to set up and run charitable and benevolent societies of their own so that church members could play their part in

uplifting, spiritually and morally, their fellow men and women.

The voluntary helper played a key role in the establishment and maintenance of religious organisations.<sup>44</sup> In Scotland, the backbone of middle class Evangelicalism was the Sunday school teacher. More than any other group, Sunday school teachers

"displayed the vigour of Victorian Evangelicalism and were instrumental in enlarging the scope and extent of religious organisation."<sup>45</sup>

The impact of religious voluntary organisations was profound. They were vehicles for implementing social reform and improving urban life. In terms of middle class participation, expenditure and enthusiasm the decades from 1870-1890 marked the climax of this aggressive home mission enterprise.<sup>46</sup> During these years the working classes were bombarded with schemes designed not only to uplift and improve them and get them into church but also to control and mould them into willing allies (or at least passive accepters) of middle class hegemonic ideology. Increasing evangelisation (stimulated by the revivals of the 1860s and '70s), church building and the prospects of social mobility together greatly extended the opportunities for working people to gain admission to church. Indeed, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century



"the social significance of religion had been heightened by the interaction between social fragmentation and denominational pluralisation, and by the rise of a network of socio-religious values which through a variety of socially - and culturally - divergent versions attuned the outlook of people to the new society."<sup>47</sup>

From the late 1880s, however, Brown thinks that in spite of the heightened social significance of religion signs began to emerge of serious changes in the status of organised religion "and in the acceptance of the Evangelical analysis of industrial society."<sup>48</sup> Religious organisations, including the churches, ceased to grow relative to population. The voluntary-ameliorative approach to social problems had failed to bring about the desired transformation of society, and the greater proportion of the working classes still did not go to church. Organised religion was moving towards a crisis, a crisis which proved to be especially serious for the dissenting churches.<sup>49</sup>

A number of forces lay behind this crisis. Most importantly, there was a contraction in evangelisation occasioned by a withdrawal of middle class support for Evangelicalism and an undermining of proletarian acceptance of bourgeois hegemony.<sup>50</sup> Middle class withdrawal was part of a wider process of more rapid social segregation in towns and cities during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Suburbanisation, essentially the movement of the middle classes away from densely populated urban centres to



greener parts, meant a loss of voluntary helpers and money. Social distance widened because the middle classes built and serviced their own churches in the new residential areas. One consequence of middle class withdrawal was a professionalisation of the voluntary agencies.<sup>51</sup> Another was proletarianisation as organisations like Sunday schools became appropriated from below.<sup>52</sup> The values which Evangelicalism had fostered had apparently bound the social classes together but in fact, argues Brown, the real relevance of these values

"lay in adaptability to different work and life experiences... such virtues... were as much statements of group independence and solidarity as of interclass discourse and unity."<sup>53</sup>

In short, while Evangelicalism provided an ideology for social uniformity it also provided a venue for social contest.<sup>54</sup>

The dominance of Evangelicalism had been founded on the social relevance of the Evangelical vision and on its uniqueness for reforming society and removing social ills. But Evangelicalism

"had operated and could only operate with any real power, as a single hegemonic ideology unchallenged by competing ideologies."<sup>55</sup>

The withdrawal of the middle classes and the suburbanisation of their churches coupled with the new

ideologies of the Labour and Socialist movements, and secularising trends in leisure, deepened the segregation of urban social classes.

Until the 1880s Evangelical religion had held the key to social salvation because it offered an ethos of individualism which allowed for "improvement".<sup>56</sup> It possessed an agenda for social action for the rescue of the "degenerate" through a combination of philanthropy and selective intervention by the State.<sup>57</sup> Evangelical values were the bedrock on which personal worth was fixed and "improvement" involved a combination in religious, moral and economic spheres.<sup>58</sup> From the late 1880s, however, this hegemonic Evangelical grasp of public ideology started to loosen. Non-churchgoing increased and the Sunday School movement went into decline.<sup>59</sup> A new concern about the social inequalities which still persisted arose within the churches, and churchmen became embroiled in debates on the causes of inequality and ethics of its continuation.<sup>60</sup> Evangelicalism's monopoly of respectability was being undermined. Rationalism and religious doubt, fuelled by biblical criticism, was working against the churches while leisure for pleasure was displacing leisure for improvement, in which the churches had had the greatest stake. There were rising demands for the churches to voice support for collectivist action by the State. Above all, the churches discovered that the new agendas of social

action were not emanating from an Evangelical or any other religious source but from the Labour movement.

"The initiative in social and political action was passing out of the hands of activists inspired by religion, and the bearers of salvation were now trades union leaders, Socialist intellectuals and Labour politicians."<sup>61</sup>

Brown contends that the undermining of Evangelical thinking was nowhere more apparent than in the ideological change within the Labour movement itself.<sup>62</sup>

During the first half of the nineteenth century the working classes were heavily involved in religion. In particular, the rise of Evangelical dissent

"encompassed a complex social fragmentation which gave Scottish Protestantism a strong proletarian tradition."<sup>63</sup>

The Disruption issues of congregational democracy promoted dissent, and overwhelmingly among the working classes.<sup>64</sup> Labour organisations and radical Labour movements such as Chartism were imbued with Evangelical precepts.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the dominance of the working classes as members of the Protestant churches did not change in the four decades after 1850.<sup>66</sup> Although the mid-Victorian period was characterised by a reassertion of middle class control over the churches and a diminution of proletarian self-determination in religion, the greater prosperity of the

decades from 1850-1880 seemed to confirm the relevance of Evangelical values and the Evangelical framework within which these values became generally acceptable in skilled workmen-artisan circles.<sup>67</sup> The craft unions of the "Labour aristocracy" articulated their ideology in terms of middle class Evangelicalism and there was broad agreement with the middle classes and the churches on the virtues of the economic system and its social conventions.<sup>68</sup> However, this uniformity was more apparent than real because there was in fact little direct contact between organised religion and the organised Labour movement.<sup>69</sup> Indeed, much antipathy existed for there was disagreement on unions, strikes, radicalism and the threat to hierarchical society which these posed. In the last quarter of the century the churches' relations with Labour deteriorated. New Unionism in conjunction with Socialist thought offered an alternative to Evangelical improvement. The Socialist Revivalism of the late '80s and the '90s provided an alternative outlet for the energies, enthusiasm and commitment of working people.<sup>70</sup> Labour representation in the late '90s and early 1900s - on school boards, town councils and then in Parliament itself - gave political weight to an ideology which directly challenged the values of competitive individualism and laissez-faire capitalism which Evangelicalism supposedly embodied.<sup>71</sup> A renewed awareness of the sheer scale of poverty and deprivation in urban Britain enabled the Labour and Socialist movements to pull the carpet from under the churches and consequently

churchmen were driven to reassess traditional Evangelical thinking. Among other things, this new social conscience produced new social theology which differed from Evangelicalism in that it rejected conversion, was a movement dominated by ministers rather than lay people and was a call for professionalisation and State interventionism.<sup>72</sup>

In short, the secularisation of social prophecy from the late 1880s, championed by the Labour and Socialist movements, marked the end of the social and cultural dominance of Evangelicalism. The churches investigations of the 'social question' spelled out a Socialist message rather than a Christian one. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century a new form of working class alienation from organised religion was emerging

"not an alienation from churches per se, nor from religion and religious faith, but an alienation from the political ideology which traditional churches represented."<sup>73</sup>

#### Against Callum Brown

Callum Brown analyses religion primarily in terms of its apparent propensity to reflect the socio-economic structures of society. Nineteenth century Evangelicalism

was a symptom or sign of the change from pre-industrial society to industrial, urban society.

However, it may be appropriate to ask whether or not Brown understands and accurately depicts Evangelical religion as religion. He frequently resorts to theoretical generalities such as class, hegemony or ideology which while they are useful analytical tools, are only tools. In Brown's work, however, too often they lead him into anachronism and, more seriously, obscure the fact that religious belief constituted the heart of Evangelicalism.

Religious change in general during the nineteenth century, and Evangelicalism and dissent in particular were not simply a sign or reflection of social and economic changes. Religion was not necessarily or even substantially the superstructure of the relations of production. In so far as religion can be defined at all - as human recognition of transcendental power and the effect of such recognition on lives and conduct, or as Currie, Gilbert and Horsley have put it

"the attempt to effect certain ends either in this world or in other worlds by means wholly or partially supernatural."<sup>74</sup>

- it could be a generator of societal change. These definitions interpret religion as purposive process, as

instrumentality. "The point of religion... is not to interpret the world but to change it."<sup>75</sup>

In our so-called secular age many people find it difficult to take seriously belief in a supernatural deity, a belief upon which Christianity is based. They have neither command of nor familiarity with the language of theology which Christianity employs. Moreover, they are accustomed to sociological or psychological explanations of religious belief, explanations which usually suggest that religious belief is something other than what it purports to be. By projecting this disbelief onto the past, however, such persons preclude themselves from a sympathetic understanding of societies where religion was a crucial element in the constitution of people's mental framework. J F C Harrison has called this backward projection of disbelief "anachronistic blindness"

"We simply fail to see the force or logic of something which does not rest on our own intellectual assumptions and so we are incredulous."

But "even if beliefs were in fact mistaken or delusional, it is still important to try and understand them."<sup>76</sup>

It is not the business of historians of religion looking at Evangelicalism in nineteenth century Britain to judge the truth or falsity of that particular system of religious belief. Rather, they must describe the belief system and interpret the effects of it on human lives and conduct.



Any objective explanation of Evangelicalism must concern itself with the forces unleashed by Evangelicalism. This is not to suggest that belief or faith is inaccessible to reason. On the contrary, it is to say that Evangelicalism was founded on religious belief and existed in a society where, although Christianity was under attack, it was also widely accepted and acceptable. In general, religious belief was not thought to be unreasonable. This is why, as Brown has noted, from the Evangelical viewpoint the cities' social problems were all interrelated products of the spiritual failure of individuals themselves. Certainly, in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain there were economic contradictions that were reflected by religion but to ignore the reality of religious belief and its effects, and give weight instead to socio-economic relationships in order to explain religion away is to give a distorted picture of nineteenth century Britain. It is to risk transferring on to past society a set of present day problems which theories that claim to be scientific have with the question of religious belief.

Now Brown has argued that Evangelicalism was an overarching moral and religious interpretation of society. When this is coupled with his view of religion reflecting socio-economic change it produces an analysis which closely resembles Peter Berger's thesis in The Social Reality of Religion.<sup>77</sup>



Berger's argument is derived from the classical Marxist position that religion is determined by economic relations, is ideology, and is ultimately a form of false-consciousness. Berger views society as a dialectical phenomenon. It is a human product and nothing but a human product yet acts back on its producers so that it appears to have an objectivity outside of mankind. Religion occupies a distinctive place in the human enterprise of world construction and is part of the fundamental dialectical process of society. Religion reflects, maintains, sustains, legitimates and projects the social order. It is both a world-shaking and a world-maintaining force. But above all, religion is a superstructure, a "sacred canopy", overarching society. In both its world-maintaining and world-shaking appearances religion is also alienating and de-alienating.

"In all its manifestations, religion constitutes an immense projection of human meanings into the empty vastness of the Universe, a projection to be sure which comes back as an alien reality to haunt its producers."<sup>78</sup>

Berger thinks that human beings have a terror of chaos, of anomie; a fear of confronting, without a comprehensive framework of interpretation, the flux of experience. People have an innate dread of meaninglessness so they cling to socially objectivated systems of meaning, such as religion, which act as effective bulwarks against anomie by reinforcing social order.

However, Berger's argument is seriously flawed. The methodological atheism of his Social Reality of Religion means that he has decided in advance that the Universe is an empty vastness - an assumption that nineteenth century Evangelicals, for example, would not have accepted. Indeed, Berger himself having reflected on his analysis of religion, realised that his was neither a sufficiently objective nor an adequate view of religion. In a later work, A Rumour of Angels,<sup>79</sup> he attempted to come to terms with the problems caused by a priori methodological atheism.

If one chooses to explain religion away as something else then one is likely to dismiss the supernatural element around which religious structures are usually built. But when discussing nineteenth century Evangelicalism it is essential to pay close attention to the conviction among Evangelicals that God, through Christ and the Church, underpinned human society. This notion of underpinning or hypostasis is quite different from Berger's overarching canopy for it implies that religion is substructure not superstructure. Evangelicalism rested on people's capacity to believe in God in Christ, and to act on the basis of that belief. Evangelical stress on immanence, activism and the need to transform society helps to explain what Geoffrey Best described as a flaunting of, and familiarity with sacred persons, things and actions.<sup>80</sup> Emphasis on the

immanence of God served as a complementarity to His transcendence and gave Evangelicalism a genuine integrity. This explains Evangelicals' distrust of the abstract in favour of concreteness, and the ease with which Evangelical categories and methods could readily be employed in the world outside of the institutional churches. Thus, organisations apparently peripheral to mainstream religion, Duncan of Ruthwell's Savings Bank, for example,<sup>81</sup> can be used to illustrate the mechanics of Evangelical mission culture.

Callum Brown's analysis of Evangelicalism as an overarching moral and religious interpretation of the cities' social problems is open to question. There is a hint of anachronistic blindness. Furthermore, there are difficulties with Brown's decay or decline of Evangelicalism thesis, especially over the question of chronology. D J Withrington has argued that the anxiety and self-questioning among Scottish churchmen of the 1880s and 1890s had its immediate roots in the renewed and publicly expressed worries about the extent and causes of non-churchgoing among the urban working classes, beginning in the late 1860s.<sup>82</sup> The anxieties of the '80s and '90s did not suddenly appear. It was during the 1860s and '70s that the Scottish churches began to develop a "new social conscience".<sup>83</sup> However, with due respect to Withrington, it is important to note that the debates of the 1860s and '70s were themselves the recurrence of arguments that had raged

following the 1851 religious census and, even before that, during the 1820s and 1830s. If anxiety and doubt in the 1880s were indicative of the decay of Evangelicalism then it is clear that the roots of decay are to be located much earlier on. The debate about Evangelical responses to urban problems was not more vigorous in the '80s and '90s than it had been in the 1830s. The voluntary-ameliorative approach which Evangelicals championed was a series of supply responses often based on ad hoc solutions to problems for voluntarism was an approach rather than a system. Although there was agreement across denominations on the need to get people into churches there was always disagreement on how best to do this. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century it had certainly become clear that, in some respects, the Evangelical approach to social problems and the vision of a transformed society contrasted sharply with the reality of urban social conditions. What made this realisation shocking to contemporaries was the implication that the contrast between intention and reality had existed throughout the century. Yet it was precisely this contrast which, from the start, had given Evangelicalism its creative energy. Pricked consciences in the '80s and '90s may have pointed to a decay of Evangelicalism but they also indicated a desire to rejuvenate it.

There are three other reasons why the chronology of Brown's decay of Evangelicalism is debatable. First, the decades

between 1880 and 1914 witnessed the high tide of British overseas missions. Obviously this overseas expansion was related to the increasing size of the British Empire. No doubt it could also be argued that overseas developments were symptomatic of declining Evangelicalism at home. But given that enthusiasm for foreign missions was rooted in domestic Evangelical mission culture, and that it was the home churches that were supporting both home and foreign missions, it is likely that overseas expansion was indicative of a continuing confidence in Evangelicalism in spite of setbacks on the home front.

Second, there were all sorts of movements within late century Evangelicalism of which the most famous was the Keswick Movement.<sup>84</sup> Now while these may have signalled a turn in the Evangelical tide they also testified to an on-going vitality and to an ability and willingness to change.

Third, the rate or depth of decay was not evenly spread. Brown concentrates on the big cities. Although much that applies in this setting applies in the towns too, equally much does not. To understand Evangelicalism fully it is essential to recognise that it took on local garb. Evangelicalism's strength, persistence and pervasiveness was locally based. It encouraged and utilised the force of parochialism, and nurtured and activated people's sense of belonging to a particular place. During the 1830s and 1840s, Evangelicalism was crucial in shaping the identity

of many of those communities most deeply affected by rapid and unpredictable change. Furthermore, even at the height of industrial revolution the small towns were not necessarily the melting-pots that cities were. The dominance of Evangelicalism and dissent in Airdrie, for example, remained virtually unchallenged until the First World War - as we shall see.

The most controversial of Brown's contentions is that the decline of Evangelicalism from the 1880s in particular was directly related to the rise of the Labour and Socialist movements. The collectivism of these movements brought forward a new ideology that was capable of challenging Evangelicalism because it was not a child of Evangelicalism. Nevertheless, underlying the issue of ideological struggle between Church and Labour was "the irony of the religiosity of the Labour movement and the majority of Labour supporters."<sup>85</sup>

But to suggest that the "religiosity" of the Labour movement was ironic is quite misleading. It betrays a lack of understanding of the nature of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Socialist Revivalism and therefore of the continuing strength, appeal and impact of Evangelical religion - well beyond the 1880s and '90s. The Socialist Revival cannot easily be considered apart from the religious context in which it was formed.

### Notes

1. G M Young, Portrait of an Age: Victorian England, Oxford University Press, 1983 edn., p 5.
2. D W Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989, p 150.
3. Ibid, p 149.

See also:

G Kitson Clark, The Making of Victorian England, University Paperback, Methuen, London, 1985 edn., Chapter 1, 'The Task of Revision', pp 1-27 and Chapter 6, 'The Religion of the People', pp 147-205.

Ian Bradley, The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians, Jonathan Cape, London, 1976.

Geoffrey Best, 'Evangelicalism and the Victorians', in Antony Symondson, The Victorian Crisis of Faith, SPCK, London, 1970, pp 37-55.

Geoffrey Best, Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-1875, Fontana Press, London, 1979, pp 190-218.

4. Bebbington, op cit, pp 2-3.
5. Ibid, p 7.
6. Ibid, p 7.
7. Ibid, p 8.
8. Ibid, pp 9-10.
9. Ibid, p 14.
10. Ibid, p 16.
11. Ibid, pp 16-17.
12. Callum Brown, The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730, Methuen, London, 1987, p 14-15.
13. Ibid, p 15.
14. Ibid, pp 16-17.
15. Ibid, p 16.
16. Ibid, pp 16-17
17. Ibid, p 17.





18. Ibid, p 19.
19. Ibid, p 19.
20. Keith Robbins, Nineteenth Century Britain: Integration and Diversity, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988, p 63.
21. James Kirk, Patterns of Reform: Continuity and Change in the Reformation Kirk, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1989, p 77.
22. Ibid, p 80.
23. Thomas Chalmers, Lectures on the Establishment and Extension of National churches, 1838.
24. Callum Brown, 'Protest in the Pews: Interpreting Presbyterianism and Society in Fracture During the Scottish Economic Revolution', in T M Devine, Conflict and Stability in Scottish Society 1700-1850 John Donald, Edinburgh, 1990, p 83-91.  
  
Callum Brown, 'Religion and Social Change' in T M Devine and Rosalind Mitchison, People and Society in Scotland, Volume I 1760-1830, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1988, p 146.
25. Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution, Penguin, London, 1975.
26. J F C Harrison, The Second Coming: Popular Millenarianism, 1780-1850, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1979.
27. Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century millenarian groups such as the Buchanites were expressions of popular religious consciousness but they were nevertheless distinctly minority groups.  
  
See: J F C Harrison, op cit, pp 32-38.
28. Rosalind Mitchison, Lordship to Patronage, Scotland, 1603-1745, Edinburgh University Press, 1990, p 176.
29. Richard Sher, Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1990 edn., p 324.
30. Ibid, p 324.
31. Ibid, p 324.
32. Ibid, pp 53-54.



33. Ibid, p 324.
34. Ibid, esp. Chapter Six, 'For the Glory of Scotland', pp 213-261.
35. Ibid, Chapter Six.
36. Geoffrey Best, 'Evangelicalism and the Victorians', in Symondson, op cit, pp 48-49.
37. Bebbington, op cit, p 150.
38. Callum Brown, The Social History of Religion in Scotland, p 136.
39. Ibid, p 136.
40. Ibid, p 136.
41. Ibid, p 136.
42. Ibid, p 143.
43. Olive Checkland, Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland: Social Welfare and the Voluntary Principle, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1980, Chapter 2, 'Piety as Programme'.
44. Brown, The Social History of Religion, p 143.
45. Ibid, p 145.
46. Ibid, pp 145-147 and pp 160-161.
47. Ibid, p 166.
48. Ibid, p 169.
49. Ibid, p 170.
50. Ibid, pp 170-184.
51. Ibid, pp 181-182.
52. Ibid, pp 181-182.
53. Ibid, p 166.
54. Ibid, p 166.
55. Ibid, p 172.
56. Ibid, p 185.
57. Ibid, p 185.

58. Ibid, p 185.
59. Ibid, p 185.
60. Ibid, p 185.
61. Ibid, p 187.
62. Ibid, p 187.
63. Callum Brown, '"Each take off their several way?": The Protestant churches and the Working Classes in Scotland', in Graham Walker and Tom Gallagher, Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Popular Culture in Modern Scotland, Edinburgh University Press, 1990, p 74.
64. Ibid, p 77.
65. Brown, The Social History of Religion in Scotland, p 187.
66. Brown, 'The Protestant churches and the Working Classes in Scotland', Walker and Gallacher, op cit, p 77.
67. Brown, The Social History of Religion in Scotland, p 187.
68. Ibid, p 187.
69. Ibid, p 188.
70. Ibid, p 188.
71. Ibid, p 188.
72. Ibid, p 188-193.
73. Brown, 'The Protestant Churches and the Working Classes', Walker and Gallacher, op cit, p 78.
74. R Currie, A Gilbert, L Horsley, Churches and Church-Goers: Patterns of Church Growth in the British Isles since 1700, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977, p 1.
75. Ibid, p 1.
76. J F C Harrison, op cit, p 3.
77. Peter L Berger, The Social Reality of Religion, Faber and Faber, London, 1969, Published in the USA as The Sacred Canopy.
78. Ibid, p 100.

79. A Rumour of Angels, Penguin, London, 1969.
80. Geoffrey Best, 'Evangelicalism and the Victorians', in Symondson, op cit, p 49.
81. For Duncan of Ruthwell see:  
H Oliver Horne, A History of Savings Banks, Oxford University Press, 1947, Chapter III, pp 39-57.
82. D J Withrington, 'The churches in Scotland c1870-c1900: Towards A New Social Conscience?', Records of the Scottish Church History Society, Volume 19, 1977, pp 155-169.
83. Ibid.
84. Bebbington, op cit, pp 151-180, Chapter 5, 'Holiness Unto the Lord: Keswick and its Context in the Later Nineteenth Century'.
85. Brown, 'The Protestant churches and the Working Classes', Walker and Gallacher, op cit, p 70.

## CHAPTER TWO

### EVANGELICALISM AND THE SOCIALIST REVIVAL, 1880-1914

#### - A REINTERPRETATION

"There is a Land mine eyes have seen... "  
(Sacred Songs and Solos, No 981)

#### The Origins of the Labour Party

The conventional view of the rise of Labour as a political force in Britain from the late 1880s can be summarised as follows.

Until the 1890s there was no political organisation or party either in Parliament or in public life which fully represented the special interests or outlook of workers. The Trades Union Congress (1868) was a pressure group of limited scope and influence acting, for the most part, on behalf of craft unions of skilled working men.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, even after the Third Reform Act (1884) still only around fifty percent of the adult male population of Britain had the vote.<sup>2</sup> So far as workers counted in politics "they were mostly staunchly Liberal. They went to chapel and worshipped God and Mr Gladstone."<sup>3</sup>

However, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century there was a dramatic change in the political atmosphere in Britain. The economy was showing signs of stress and strain in the wake of foreign competition.<sup>4</sup> The working classes were the principal victims. Unemployment and industrial unrest coupled with a rising tide of mass forms of leisure, such as football, signalled the presence of "a mature sense of working class consciousness, class anger and class pride."<sup>5</sup> This class consciousness was given political form and outlet through the politicisation of the trades union movement and by the influence of Socialism.

From the 1850s to the 1880s trades unionism was dominated by the skilled workers of the Labour "aristocracy" whose concerns were limited to the interests of union members and to maintaining working class respectability.<sup>6</sup> In the course of the 1880s and '90s, however, trades unionism developed a new character largely as a result of the rapid unionisation of unskilled workers; dockers, transport workers, gas workers and general labourers.<sup>7</sup> The leaders of this New Unionism were often more militant, class conscious and keen for political involvement outside of the Liberal Party than the leaders of the old-style craft unions.<sup>8</sup> Yet the older unions were also becoming aware of the need for more direct political protection as employers launched counter-attacks against the trade union movement by the use of cheap, non-union labour and through the courts.<sup>9</sup>

Particularly during economic downturns, skilled workers found that they were no more secure than unskilled workers.

From the late 1880s New Unionism was one of the channels through which the influence of Socialism began to alter the complexion of British politics. The Socialists' call for the collective ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange went further than most Liberals were prepared to go. Socialism

"supplied the vital force which gave the different impulses within the trades unions the momentum to form a Labour Party."<sup>10</sup>

Outside the trades union movement and the mainstream political parties, three political groups emerged as champions of Socialism: the middle class intellectual dominated Fabians; the Marxist Social Democratic Federation, and the Independent Labour Party.<sup>11</sup> Although not formed until 1893 - nine years after the Fabians and the SDF - the ILP quickly became the largest and most conspicuously working class socialist party.<sup>12</sup>

The ILP was never a mass party or movement in the same sense as the trades unions. It was dominated by highly articulate, educated or self-educated skilled workers. Party membership rarely included the very poor.<sup>13</sup> In its early years, efforts were concentrated on winning individual hearts and minds for Socialism. The ILP also

produced, at local and national level, a brood of charismatic leaders<sup>14</sup> who pursued a strategy of alliance with trades unions and who were persistent in their demands for Independent Labour representation in Parliament; that is, for a Labour Party free from the clutches of the Liberals.<sup>15</sup> Pursuit of the unions was the driving force behind the establishment of a Labour Representation Committee, formed at a meeting of ILPers, trades unionists, Fabians and members of the Cooperative movement at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, London in February 1900.<sup>16</sup> In 1906 this LRC was rechristened simply the Labour Party following the successful election of twenty-nine LRC candidates to Parliament.<sup>17</sup> The formation of the Labour Party, which remained a loose federal organisation until 1918,<sup>18</sup> has been described as "a shot-gun wedding"<sup>19</sup> between ILP and Fabian Socialists and the trades unions. The Socialists needed working class support to survive and the trades unions wanted a political voice, especially in the wake of employers' counter-offensives.

Until the reorganisation of the Labour Party in 1918, when constituency Labour Parties were set up for individual membership,<sup>20</sup> the ILP was the main route by which individuals joined the Labour Party. More importantly, the ILP kept Socialism firmly at the top of the pre-1918 Labour Party agenda.<sup>21</sup>

However, so the conventional argument continues, even before 1900 it was Labourism - trade union politics, conducted through the Parliamentary system - rather than Socialism which emerged as the dominant ideology of the British Labour movement.<sup>22</sup> Labourism united the disparate groups of liberals, Christian radicals, militant Socialists and trade unionists who were gathering under the Labour Party banner.<sup>23</sup> It marked out specific ideological limits within which the Labour Party's theory and practice evolved. Labourist assumptions

"were flexible enough to accommodate a large number of different political ideas while distinct enough eventually to exclude the Liberal Party on the Right and the various types of revolutionaries on the Left."<sup>24</sup>

Labourism developed a dynamic of its own and was able to absorb or reject challenges to its assumptions.<sup>25</sup> By 1900 it had supplanted the Socialism of the ILP. The Labour Party became, above all, a trade union party with trade union priorities that were reformist but not Socialist.<sup>26</sup> It operated within terms limited by trade union codes of behaviour, conventions, principles and politics.<sup>27</sup> Although the new constitution of the remodelled Labour Party of 1918 included the Socialist objective - enshrined in Clause IV - it in fact "confirmed the triumph of the unions and the defeat of the Socialists."<sup>28</sup> The Labour Party, unlike the ILP, was not specifically designed to serve the cause of Socialism as an immediate priority.<sup>29</sup>



Furthermore, the insertion of Clause IV in the party constitution ensured that the ILP was no longer required to keep Socialism on the agenda of the burgeoning Labour movement. The ILP lost ground to the new constituency Labour parties and its influence diminished. It became a sectarian group of the more zealous Socialists which then became distanced from the Parliamentary Labour Party. During the 1920s ILP MPs increasingly indulged in guerrilla tactics in an effort to disrupt the efforts of the PLP and call attention to the latter's apparently non-socialist ideology. Eventually the ILP decided that it was pointless to continue under the Labour Party umbrella. In July 1932 it disaffiliated from the Labour Party.<sup>30</sup> The Socialist ILP had become isolated and marginal in a Labourist Labour Party.

#### Socialist Revivalism and Labourism

The triumph of Labourism thesis, as outlined above, for the decline and eventual self-immolation of the ILP is inadequate. There can be no doubt that the ILP was explicitly Socialist in a way which the Labour Party was not. However, the fact is that the ILP, and especially the pre-1918 leadership, had led the campaign for alliance with the trades unions and for the removal of the unions from the orbit of Liberalism. David Howell has shown how, at regional level, the trade union bases of the ILP were

crucial to its success.<sup>31</sup> The ILP was fundamentally Labourist. At the inaugural conference of the LRC in 1900 it was the ILPers, and especially James Keir Hardie, who dominated the proceedings.<sup>32</sup> Keir Hardie personally determined the major strategic decisions reached. Labour candidatures were not to be restricted to working men or to Socialists or to advocates of class war.<sup>33</sup> Proposals to operate under Liberal auspices were rejected and Marxist opposition to the Labour alliance strategy was outmanoeuvred.<sup>34</sup> Keir Hardie carried the vital amendment that a distinctive Labour group in Parliament, with its own whips and own agreed policy, should be set up.<sup>35</sup> The accepted formula

"provided the maximum area of manoeuvre for enlisting the support of trade unionists without any implications for long-term objectives". It "set the tone for the Labour Party as it was to evolve during the first eighteen years of its history."<sup>36</sup>

The concept of Socialism as such "never intruded itself on any of the new LRC platforms."<sup>37</sup> In short, the explicit Socialism of the ILP had always been tied to a practical Labourism. The decline of the ILP cannot be properly explained by a political argument that it was a Socialist party which became isolated in, and finally stifled by a Labourist one. There is an alternative explanation and one which has been obscured by characterisations of the rise of the Labour Party that ignore or underplay all but political considerations as if these can be considered in a vacuum.

The ILP was born, lived, moved and had its being in Evangelical-mission culture. But by 1918 that context had radically altered. Most historians of the rise of the Labour and Socialist movements during the period from 1880 to 1914 are agreed that between these dates there emerged a phenomenon known as the Socialist Revival, or the "Religion of Socialism". There are disagreements about the nature of this Socialist Revival and about its chronological limits but it is generally accepted that it was most obvious during the 1890s.

The Socialist Revival was one of the key features in the creation of a distinctively British Socialism. Through Socialist Revivalism, Socialism was presented as soon-to-be-achieved and in the language of moral revolt rather than in categories of economic analysis or of materialist historical determinism. Moreover, although the emphasis on an imminent remoralised social order in which a new moral life could be practised was common to all the Socialist groups of the 1880s, it was in the ILP that this "Ethical Socialism"<sup>38</sup> with its language of fraternity and fellowship was chiefly to be found. Ethical Socialism was intended to appeal across all social classes but especially to the working classes. The workers, it was thought, were nascent Socialists. If they could be aroused to a sense of moral outrage at the injustice of their condition this could then be channelled towards their liberation from

capitalist exploitation. The working classes would be unstoppable and society transformed. Ethical Socialism favoured this complete social transformation immediately but by peaceful means. It aimed to capture the State from within by converting individuals to Socialism.

Where the ILP differed from the Labour Party was in its attitude towards Socialism. The ILP was an avowedly millenarian group located on the extremities of the Evangelical Christian continuum. For the ILP, Socialism was an urgently necessary and immediately realisable goal. Socialism was a panacea for all social ills because it was a new moral order. Labourism was merely a means towards the attainment of Socialism and was not intended to act as a brake on the rapid transition to a Socialist society that would inevitably follow the awakening of the working classes. By contrast, in the Labour Party Labourism became an end in itself, an ideology for coping with the decline of the millenarian hopes of the heady period from the late 1880s. An echo of this thesis is contained in Fenner Brockway's comment on the disaffiliation of the ILP from the Labour Party in 1932. Disaffiliation was disastrous because

"outside the Labour movement, the ILP dwindled to relative insignificance and because the Labour Party lost the inspiration of the socialism, evangelism and dynamism which the ILP at it best contributed."<sup>39</sup>

The decline of the ILP and of the Socialist Revivalism in which it had been a major component, was directly related to their origins in Evangelical-mission culture. The key concepts of mission, conversion and evangelism, which both the ILP and the churches espoused, had lost credibility as ways of transforming society by 1918. In the post-1918 years the ILP was distinguished from, and eventually isolated within the Labour Party not so much by the madness of its Socialist creed but by its anachronistic missionary methods and millenarian outlook. Between 1880 and 1914 the efforts of Socialist Revivalist ILP "missionaries" were carried on within limits imposed not simply by Labourism but by religious Evangelicalism.

Kenneth Morgan thinks that the British Labour movement enjoyed only a relatively brief heyday spanning twenty or at best thirty years from the 1880s. We must, he argues, focus on the decline as well as the rise of working class politics.<sup>40</sup> He maintains that the Socialism of the Labour Party from 1900 to 1931 was largely shaped by the ILP. The ILP was "a secular church with a powerful overlay from late Victorian non-conformity."<sup>41</sup> Here, again, we have lip-service to the idea that religion was important in the ILP ethos but a retreat into an explanation of the significance of religion that is similar to Berger's or Brown's analyses, as discussed in Chapter One. Moreover, the call to focus on decline 1880-1914 coincides with the period when, as we have noted, Brown sees the beginnings of the

decline of Evangelicalism from its peak intensity during the 1860s and 1870s. This is a coincidence worthy of further investigation.

Morgan's decline theory is not original. It was formulated as early as 1925 by the Socialist and ILPer Joseph Clayton in his book The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain, 1884-1924.<sup>42</sup> As an undergraduate at Oxford in the late 1880s Clayton was treasurer of the University branch of the Anglican Guild of St Matthew, an active Christian Socialist society. In the '90s he became Secretary of the Leeds ILP and remained an active Socialist and election agent in subsequent years. The Rise and Decline was a testimony of Clayton's disillusionment. He believed himself to be a witness to the death of Socialism and of the millenarian hope. Socialism, he argued, was a proposal to end the class struggle by the reorganisation of the community on a cooperative basis. It was distinguished from the Labour movement, which was just another name for class war or class struggle and which persists throughout the ages. The Socialist Revival, beginning in 1884, had sought to transform the Labour movement and thence society as a whole. But the story which Clayton wanted to tell in 1925 was

"a narrative of the efforts made in Britain, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, to get the idea of socialism understood and accepted; of success achieved in making the idea intelligible to the masses of people; of the adoption of political measures that seemed introductory to social democracy; of the

influence of the idea of socialism and its attraction; of the gradual abandonment of the idea and the transformation of the doctrine of socialism; to the discovery forty years later that only the name remained, that socialism was no longer a cause, a new order of society to be set up, but a programme of social reform. The discoveries, in short, that the socialist movement had come to a standstill; that socialism with its idea of a cooperative commonwealth was dead."<sup>43</sup>

It all happened, said Clayton, between 1884 and 1924 and there were still "some few persons living who can say with truth, 'I watched by its cradle, I followed its hearse'."<sup>44</sup> What Clayton mourned was the fading of the Socialist millennium conceived in religious terms for he was emphatic that the Socialist movement was an Evangelical campaign, "an adventure for men and women of high missionary fervour."<sup>45</sup>

Nor was this a retrospective vision or a post-hoc rationalisation. From the first, Clayton argued, the ILP had differed in its attitude to religion from the Marxist SDF and had welcomed Christians of any denomination or none.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, it had looked favourably on the Labour churches which John Trevor had established in the 1890s.<sup>47</sup> ILPer as missionary was not an image. It was an acceptable and accepted reality.

As we noted in Chapter One, Callum Brown thinks that Evangelicalism could only maintain ideological hegemony as long as it was unchallenged by competing ideologies. During the 1880s and '90s, however, he argues that Labour



prophecy provided a competing ideology that was successful because it was not a child of Evangelicalism. The churches discovered that new agendas of social action were no longer emanating from an Evangelical source. The initiative was passing from the churches to trade unionists, Socialists and Labour politicians. Ironically, the Labour movement and the majority of its supporters evinced a marked religiosity.

But in fact, it was precisely because the Socialist Revival and Labour prophecy were rooted in Evangelicalism that the religiosity of the Labour movement was not ironic. The decline of Socialist Evangelicalism was linked to the proletarianisation of Evangelical religion and to the decline of Evangelicalism generally. Moreover, Labour's collectivist thinking and demands for social regeneration were not wholly new, unambiguous and unrelated to Evangelical ideology nor were they necessarily successful in displacing more orthodox Evangelicalism.

#### The Midnight Cry: Socialist Revivalism, 1880-1914

"There can be no separation between politics and religion."  
(Philip Snowden, 1903)<sup>48</sup>

In his seminal article 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896', Stephen Yeo has given Socialist Revivalism a comprehensive treatment.<sup>49</sup>



He begins by indicating three ways in which the "Religion of Socialism" has been interpreted. First, as a substitute religion filling the gap left by declining orthodox Christianity and weaning non-conformist working class liberals in particular, on to secular "scientific" Socialism. Second, as a metaphor or moralising dress worn by Socialists reflecting the nature of dominant popular middle class culture. And third, as a line of fissure along which Marxist ideology cracked when it came into contact with class organisation in national culture.<sup>50</sup>

Yeo's purpose is not to rehearse any of these interpretations but rather to describe the extent and character of the phenomenon of the Religion of Socialism during the period of its maximum extent which, he argues, was between 1883 and 1896, and then to consider its implications for the later Labour movement.<sup>51</sup> The presence and character of the Religion of Socialism during the 1880s and '90s

"was so substantial that it may well have something to do with the large space occupied by the Labour Party in British Socialism and with the consequent small space available for creative thinking on the problem of agency"<sup>52</sup>

The Socialist Revival of the '80s and '90s was marked by a crusading zeal, a sense of mission, an intensity of aspiration bordering on apocalypticism, and a language of

religiosity.<sup>53</sup> But these religious elements were not associated with "drugged passivity or frustrated political initiative."<sup>54</sup>

Intensity of aspiration and activity was part of a wider late Victorian moral revolt among sections of the middle class.<sup>55</sup> This revolt was characterised by a new consciousness of sin among men of intellect and property. It was a collective rather than an individual consciousness that the industrial organisation which had made Britain one of the wealthiest nations on earth, and a small number of people fabulously rich, had failed to provide a decent livelihood and lifestyle for a majority of citizens. The new consciousness overlapped with Socialism in which it found a material ally. "Working class and middle class imperatives coincided."<sup>56</sup>

Moral repugnance was the mainspring of the crusading zeal of Socialists and it was not simply "an emotive cloak concealing opportunism".<sup>57</sup> Socialist demands such as the nationalisation of land and capital (which had been made particularly prominent by Henry George's Progress and Poverty [1879])<sup>58</sup> were placed

"in the setting of individual lifestyles and expected transformations in culture and society, which were seen as inseparable from material demands. An exciting conjunction had been reached between deeply felt moral imperatives and actual social agency which by its very nature would carry them into existence in a soon-to-be-realised social order."<sup>59</sup>

The crucial aspect of the Socialist crusade was the business of "making Socialists"; of "converting" the individual to Socialism.<sup>60</sup> Conversion to Socialism was, argues Yeo, indistinguishable from religious conversion as documented, for example, by William James in his The Varieties of Religious Experience (1902).<sup>61</sup> Moreover, the movement towards conversion often followed a pattern:

"Poverty, religious eclecticism, unresolved guilt, domestic unhappiness, unfocused indignation, scattered anxieties, wealthy aimlessness, social unease preceded conversions in different mixes in individual cases."<sup>62</sup>

A Socialist pamphlet, meeting or Evangelist then entered and the idea of Socialism presented itself as

"a ground for hope, a convincing analysis of what had gone before, a morally impeccable challenge, and as an organised movement demanding commitment, sacrifice and missionary activity by the newly converted."<sup>63</sup>

David Howell argues that the process of conversion was a key feature of the early ILP.<sup>64</sup> The individual was urged to turn to Socialism just as sinners were exhorted to turn to Christ by revivalist missionaries.<sup>65</sup> The ILP did not encourage detailed doctrinal studies (unlike the Marxist SDF) but rather, called for "a change of heart and subsequent evincing of Socialist endeavour". Socialism was to be brought forward by the activities of "a host of individually consenting enthusiasts rather than by the

struggles of a class".<sup>66</sup> Consequently, the success of Socialism was seen as dependent

on the moral rectitude of the converted, and deviation from the appropriate standards was an inescapable problem. The party propagandists saw themselves as living for the cause and looked reprovingly on backsliders.<sup>67</sup>

Yeo contends that the complete change in way of life that Socialists demanded from converts did not lead to narrowness because the business of making Socialists was a genuine line of advance and was understood dynamically.<sup>68</sup> Changes in way of life associated with conversion were not sedative in their political effect.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, the idea of individual change and structural or social change, often seen as antithetical, were treated by Socialists as synthetical.<sup>70</sup> Personal salvation and social salvation, urged Philip Snowden, for example, were like two palm trees which bear no fruit unless they grow side by side.<sup>71</sup> Most Socialists argued that personal regeneration by itself was insufficient to bring about the emancipation of the working classes. Indeed, the conditions under which people in the industrial system were compelled to live prevented the individual regeneration of the masses.

"To change these conditions... is the social salvation which it is necessary to preach and put into practice as the complement to the preaching of individual salvation."<sup>72</sup>

Philip Snowden was by no means eccentric in his claim that in Socialism the division between politics and religion had ceased to be. The language and style of Evangelicalism pervaded the Socialist Revival of the '80s and '90s. But Yeo thinks that what words like "apostles", "evangelists", "missionaries", "new birth", "regeneration", "preaching", "gospel" actually meant in terms of any harder definition of religion is more difficult to determine.<sup>73</sup> In any case, the important question is not whether or not the Religion of Socialism was a religion but

"does examining whether Socialism [1883-1896] was doing a job for many people which more conventional religions have at different times done, help to explain some crucial features of that Socialism?"<sup>74</sup>

Yeo wants to discover if the shared commitment which was given coherence as the Religion of Socialism can be better understood using the term "religion" and if this helped contemporary activists to sustain Socialist Revivalism.

He describes six elements<sup>75</sup> which together make it helpful to think in terms of the Religion of Socialism and which may help to explain the extent of its presence.

First, the problem of theodicy or the experience of the irrationality of the world - for Max Weber, the problematic that defined and promoted religion - was an active dynamo in the Socialist Revival. The irrationality of the world was experienced as the unequal distribution of material and

cultural goods. It was not just an abstract problem for social analysis. Rather, it was a source of moral indignation that gave the Socialist message its prophetic colour.

Second, moral indignation encouraged the belief in the possibility of a break-through. A "hidden hand" was thought to be at work which would cut through the theodicy problematic offering individual and, above all, social salvation.

Third, the times were thought to be special in relation to the "hidden hand" (called History). This was a distinctive epoch to be compared only with other extraordinary epochs, such as early Christian times.

Fourth, "the People" were the vehicles or mediators of the hidden hand of History. What mattered was not a specific blueprint for change but a conviction that society could and would be transformed. Conversion followed by activism - attendance at meetings, fund-raising, propagandising - allowed individuals to be identified with the possibility of liberation for the majority from poverty and deprivation. Socialist converts would awaken the people. This sense of epochal change was permeated by versions of inevitability. Capitalism was on the point of collapse and there was a widely shared sense of crisis in political and party machines.

This dynamic, tension filled atmosphere gave the Socialist Revival a fifth characteristic; namely, intensity or absolutism about commitment. When combined with notions of the People as special agents of History and of certain and imminent change, conviction was expressed as apocalypticism. The New Jerusalem was at hand.

Sixth, there was a cultus beyond but including the Labour churches, as wide as the Labour movement itself. The '80s and '90s were a time of great organisational creativity. Socialist Revivalism was expressed in a vast range of social, educational, propagandist and leisure groups which gave participants, at local and national level, a unity which, it was thought, could form the basis for generating a new social order. Moreover,

"at this stage of the movement, as in any revival, the circle of involvement was much larger than the numbers formally organised."<sup>76</sup>

Socialism had not yet become tied to an elaborate party machine or party political ideology.<sup>77</sup> Meetings, missions, social activities and energies poured into the movement constantly reaffirming commitment to Socialism and all were thought to be means towards attainment of a Socialist society.



From 1883 until 1896 the Religion of Socialism or Socialist Revival "was doing a religious job for its adherents"<sup>78</sup> but thereafter the revivalist phase passed because the exigences of electoral politics, the expansion of capitalism rather than its demise and the subsequent postponement of the Parousia necessitated new forms of organisation on business-like lines.<sup>79</sup> Socialists became more concerned with vote-winning than with conversion. As trade unions became more and more crucial to the success of Labour politics, efficiency and financial and organisational machinery supplanted revivalism. "The Religion of Socialism did not just degenerate... it was also destroyed."<sup>80</sup>

The transformation from religious revivalism to electoral tactics does not mean, however, that the earlier phase was woolly or naive. Yeo is emphatic that the Socialist movement in its "conversionist" phase

"was itself a fundamentalist challenge which had to be contained, in the interests (from a capitalist point of view) of safer modes."<sup>81</sup>

Socialism in the conversionist phase was being practised and experienced by diverse groups and individuals. It was gaining ground and a popular hearing. It was creative, often inter-class, and based on the not incorrect assumption that capitalism was ripe for transformation and capable of being transformed. The Religion of Socialism was



a reasonable and hopeful response to the wastefulness, material and human, of the late Victorian capitalist system.<sup>82</sup>

Two main criticisms can be levelled at Yeo's analysis of Socialist Revivalism, or as he calls it, the Religion of Socialism. First, and most seriously, he has ignored the religious context within which the Socialist Revival took place. This not only distorts the picture of the phenomenon that he is describing but also weakens his interpretation of it and obscures alternative explanations of its decline.

Second, there is much evidence to suggest that Socialist Revivalism, although most apparent in the 1880s and '90s, was by no means limited to the period from 1883 to 1896. David Howell, for example, thinks 1906 might be a better closing date for the revivalist phase.<sup>83</sup> It is my contention that 1914 is better still and, more importantly, that until this date Socialist Revivalism was the foundation upon which Labourism rested. The two were not in opposition. Socialist Revivalism underpinned Labourism.

At the close of the nineteenth century Evangelicalism was still a key component of British society and culture. It continued to be part of many people's mental framework, resting on widespread continuance of religious belief.<sup>84</sup> The signs of a decline of Evangelicalism were visible, as

both Brown and Bebbington have suggested, but religion was nevertheless deeply embedded. Far more people went to church than were members of political parties and many of the most influential sections of the still limited electorate were churchgoers. In addition, religious voluntary organisations, whether specifically religious or leisure in function, although having to compete with capitalist mass leisure,<sup>85</sup> continued to command the allegiance of enormous numbers of people, especially among the working classes. This is hardly surprising. The working classes, perhaps especially in Scotland, had always been an important group in the Evangelical movement. In addition, during the nineteenth century, workers in the towns and cities had been subjected to an unprecedented series of evangelistic campaigns. By the close of the century, as Brown has noted, many once middle-class dominated Evangelical projects were appropriated from below. Moreover, through organisations like the Salvation Army, the working classes could express themselves in and through Evangelical religion without in any way imitating the values of the middle class. The circle of involvement in Evangelicalism after 1880 remained much wider than those who were formally organised in churches or religious voluntary organisations - and very much wider than those in the ambit of Socialist Revivalism. Ideologically, Evangelicalism was still a yardstick against which new ideas had to be measured. Indeed, the Socialist Commonwealth was frequently portrayed as not dissimilar to

the Early Christian ideal of a community of goods. Both inside and outside the Labour movement Socialist Revivalism was a recognisable product of Evangelical-mission culture. This made it acceptable and intelligible on the one hand - and ignored on the other. Among the very poor, precisely the people that the churches had tried but failed to attract, Socialism found few adherents. Slum dwellers often linked Christian and Socialist Revivalism as equally impossiblist solutions and viewed both with contempt.<sup>86</sup> Tressell's "ragged trousered philanthropists" scoffed at the hypocrisy and improbability of revivalist Christianity but Socialist evangelism provoked just as much derision.<sup>87</sup>

By failing to locate the Socialist Revival in the religious culture in which it was rooted Yeo has reduced it to the condition of an African mask in a museum case. In a later comment on his 'New Life' article he denied having isolated the phenomenon of the Religion of Socialism and proposing that it was a single, systematic body of theory.<sup>88</sup> He says that he had been led by some of the "surface language and features of Socialism (1883-96)"<sup>89</sup> to look at it, across a wide spectrum of differing belief,

"from the point of view of what 'religions' in general are and do for adherents. I suggested that if we did so, it would highlight some of the common features of 1883-96 socialism and explain its strengths and subsequent weaknesses. The attempt was not to docket this period of socialism as 'a religion'."<sup>90</sup>

But we cannot look at the Religion of Socialism "from the point of view of what other religions are and do for their adherents" unless we understand the religious culture in which it was located. Yeo's vague generalisation about "religion", "religions" or "religiosity" conceals as much as it explains. Only if we first understand the religious context of the Religion of Socialism can we then go on to more general discussion of what religions are and do for their adherents. Without the religious context how on earth are we to know what Yeo is comparing the Religion of Socialism to within Britain - let alone to other (and different) religions? We must know specifically to what religious tradition words like "crusade", "zeal", "apostles", "mission", "conversion", refer. The language of Socialist Revivalism was not a "surface language" of "religiosity". It was the language of Evangelical Protestant Christianity and in order to comprehend Socialists' use of this language and its appeal (or lack of appeal) we must attach it to the system to which it refers.

The language question is crucial. When early Christianity met Greek paideia the language question

"was by no means an irrelevant matter. With the Greek language a whole world of concepts, categories of thought, inherited metaphors and subtle connotations of meaning enters Christian thought."<sup>91</sup>

Similarly, in late nineteenth century Britain the language of Evangelical Protestantism provided the Socialist Revival

with a whole world of concepts, categories of thought, inherited metaphors and connotations of meaning. Moreover, just as the second century Apologists could "not take for granted what they were going to defend"<sup>92</sup> neither could the late nineteenth century British Socialist Revivalists. To reach an understanding with the people they addressed it was not enough for the Socialists to explain, in simple terms, the political and economic causes of and solutions to social inequality. Socialists had to find other common ground. Furthermore, the contact of Socialism with the pervasive ideas of the Evangelical tradition, particularly the conversion imperative and the urgency and the emotional interests of popular revivalism and millenarianism that the tours of Moody and songs of Sankey stimulated among the working classes from the 1870s on, reinforced and reassured the Socialist mind of its inevitable success and eventual universality. The Religion of Socialism or Socialist Revival could not last forever any more than could the improvisation that resulted from the Apologists use of Greek *paideia*.<sup>93</sup> In time, Socialism did become marginalised and, some would argue, immobilised in a Labourist Labour Party. However, Labourism can also be viewed as the ideology which best enabled Socialists, particularly non-Marxist Socialists, to come to terms with the non-appearance of the expected Socialist millennium.

Yeo rightly argues that the Socialist Revival was not just a cover for political opportunism. But he does not tell us

much about the fabric of the Socialists' crusade when he suggests that their demands were "placed in the setting of individual changes in lifestyle and expected transformations in culture and society which were seen as inseparable from material demands" for this is precisely what Evangelicals had all along stressed. Nor is Yeo saying anything specific to or about Socialist Revivalism when he asserts that "an exciting conjunction had been reached between deeply-felt moral imperatives and actual social agency which by its very nature would carry them into existence in a soon-to-be-realised social order". Again, this conjunction between moral imperatives and an actual social agency was one of the driving forces of Evangelical religion.

Yeo also emphasises that the key experience of conversion in Socialist Revivalism was indistinguishable from conversion as described by William James. Yet James drew most of his material for the Varieties of Religious Experience from his own culture and this should have alerted Yeo to the fact that James's work tells us more about the embeddedness of Christianity in European and North American cultures than about the varieties of religious experience world wide. It is not surprising that conversion to Socialism in the 1880s and '90s was exactly like conversion in Evangelical Protestantism for the idea of conversion was common currency. Indeed - and ironically - the Socialist Revival emphasised conversion at a time

when mainstream Evangelicalism was beginning to "aim for a decisive experience beyond conversion."<sup>94</sup> Socialist Revivalism lagged behind and this suggests just how deeply entrenched Evangelical categories were.

Furthermore, the centrality of "making Socialists", like so much else in Socialist Revivalism, was indicative of the fact that the Socialist Revival mounted a challenge from deep within Evangelical culture. However much they might try to lump Socialism and irreligion together, the churches could not escape the reality that Socialism threatened to take the ground which, up until the 1880s, had been occupied by Evangelicalism. In Scotland, as we shall see, there was a growing awareness, particularly among Presbyterians, that there was a mutual penetration between Socialism and Christianity. Presbyterianism was faced with the prospect of a renewed vision of the Calvinist Godly Commonwealth ideal championed by Socialist organisations that were not subject to the discipline of, or sponsored by the churches.

Had Yeo placed the Socialist Revival in its immediate religious context he would have seen that it was contiguous with Evangelical Protestantism. The evangelicalism of late nineteenth century Socialism was not simply "borrowing" from, or imitating Evangelical Christianity and consequently the challenge to capitalism was all the more real. The "wide acceptability" of the Religion of



Socialism is only explicable if we acknowledge that it was recognisable as a point on the Evangelical continuum ranging from theology to popular Revivalism. Callum Brown is right, then, to point out that Evangelical hegemony was challenged by Labour prophecy. But this was not necessarily because (as he argues) Socialism was a new ideology.

Victor Bailey in his work on the Salvation Army and Labour in late Victorian-Edwardian London<sup>95</sup> has demonstrated that the Socialist Revival becomes meaningful only when set in the context of Evangelical Protestantism. At the same time he has shown that Socialist Revivalism was not confined to the period from 1883 to 1896 but lasted until 1910, and probably longer.

Bailey's aim is to counter too rigid application of the "embourgeoisement thesis" which claims that from the mid-nineteenth century the middle class largely succeeded in imposing habits and attitudes on the working classes by means of new or reinvigorated mechanisms of social control: law, factory system, wage labour and, less overtly, social welfare, education, leisure, philanthropy and religion.<sup>96</sup> This diminished the threat of class war by promoting the transformation of sections of the working class into a part of the middle class.



Bailey argues that the social control/embourgeoisement theses ignore and underestimate working class generation of their own values and attitudes suited to the requirements of life in urban, industrial society.<sup>97</sup> In previous studies of the Salvation Army, Bailey contends, there has been too great a willingness to portray it as just another example of the middle class onslaught on the "uncivilised poor"; a variation of middle class evangelism and philanthropy which sought to recreate the poor in its own image thereby reducing the threat of social chaos presented by densely populated, poor urban areas.<sup>98</sup>

Bailey sees the Salvation Army differently. It was an expression of independent working class cultural development, not an agency of middle class ideological hegemony.<sup>99</sup> In London, the Army developed a definite rapport with the Labour movement, particularly in the sphere of social reform.<sup>100</sup> There were profound social and ideological affinities between Salvationism and Labour. This was a period which, Bailey notes, E P Thompson described as

"a profoundly ambiguous moment when Salvationism ran in double harness with London radicalism and with the... Labour movement."<sup>101</sup>

Emerging in 1878, "from the cocoon of Christian mission",<sup>102</sup> the Salvation Army illustrated that religion could break new ground and make considerable headway among

the urban poor. In the two decades after 1886 around four million people<sup>103</sup> were directly involved and affected in varying degrees by the new Salvationism. The Army embarked on a variety of forms of social work becoming, in its founder William Booth's eyes, an instrument of social and spiritual deliverance.

Following Yeo's description of the Religion of Socialism, Bailey argues that the main features of the Socialist Revival of the late nineteenth century were almost indistinguishable from those of Salvationism. Indeed,

"Socialists no less than Salvationists believed that Socialism (or Salvationism) would come only if the gospel were preached sufficiently: it was all a matter of proselytising."<sup>104</sup>

Both movements were identified as being of the same species. Both suffered attacks from certain sections of the London working classes, and a real accord developed between Socialists and Salvationists in the struggle to prevent the London authorities from putting a stop to open-air meetings and processions. There were compelling similarities in the process of conversion, in social class appeal and constitution, and in the way that Socialists and Salvationists drew strength from a new emerging working class consciousness. Among working class individuals the new consciousness was just as likely (in London at least) to be expressed and formalised by joining the Salvation Army as the Labour movement.

Although in the 1880s the Army's approach to poverty and unemployment was couched in the language of individual responsibility and moral failure, it did not reject collectivism. Indeed, as Yeo has pointed out, General Booth of the Salvation Army was preoccupied with the difference between

"'The Socialism of Infidelity [which] says; Make the circumstances of the people prosperous and society will be prosperous' and 'the Socialism of Salvation [which] says; make the people good and their circumstances will be good.'"<sup>105</sup>

In the late '80s Booth was backing the latter but in the introduction to In Darkest England and the Way Out (1890) he conceded

"'that circumstances had to be attacked directly, as well as consciences, in order to get through to individuals, who remained the real bricks of the social fabric' "<sup>106</sup>

In Darkest England was not a call for Socialism in government but neither was it a rigorous defence of laissez-faire individualism.

The Salvation Army, then, was not another stone in the edifice of middle class Evangelicalism. Salvationism was primarily proletarian and indicative of the independent transformation of working class culture. Bailey's arguments reinforce the case for claiming that we must look

at the impact of Evangelicalism when trying to account for the success or failure of Socialist Revivalism. In London, Socialism and Salvationism could both be described as expressions of popular religious consciousness.

False Consciousness - A Marxist Approach to the Socialist Revival

The embourgeoisement thesis, which was Bailey's target, rests on Marxist economic determinism. To those who accept Marxist assumptions the Socialist Revival or the Religion of Socialism is odd, incidental and not central to the development of mainstream British Socialism and the Labour movement. Socialist Revivalism was at best primitive.

"Underlying these assumptions is a view of this phase in the social history of socialism as transitional to something higher, easing the passage into a more developed organisational/ideological [and secular] challenge."<sup>107</sup>

Of all the British Marxist historians, E J Hobsbawm's approach to religion has been most consistent in its adherence to the crude Marxist line:<sup>108</sup> religion is an ideological reflection of economic relations. It is false consciousness. Hobsbawm's position was most clearly and bluntly stated in The Age of Capital:

"Compared to secular ideology religion... is of comparatively slight interest and does not deserve extended treatment."<sup>109</sup>

Christian missionaries were "not notably successful"<sup>110</sup> at home or abroad. By contrast, anti-clericalism and secularism were important forces especially in the rising Labour and Socialist movements.<sup>111</sup> Religion was the expression of the dominant bourgeoisie and most of the Anglo-Saxon middle classes remained, in general, practising believers "or at any rate hypocrites"<sup>112</sup>

This approach to religion has governed Hobsbawm's treatment of the role of religion in the British Labour movement. In a famous essay on "Labour Sects"<sup>113</sup> a study of the connection between religion and Socialism in Britain, Hobsbawm had three aims: first, to show that religion is ideology and therefore false-consciousness; second, to argue that it was the secularism of European Labour and Socialist movements which made them distinctively modern; and third, to show that while Labour sects in Britain appear to be the exception to the second argument, in fact the British Labour and Socialist movement was not totally different from those of continental Europe. It too was dominated by the secularist-radical tradition stretching from Tom Paine in the late eighteenth century to Marx, Bradlaugh and Blatchford in the nineteenth.<sup>114</sup>

The modern Labour movement in Britain and Europe, argued Hobsbawm, was the product of the era of the American and French Revolutions. These were the first mass political movements in history to express their ideology in terms of secular rationalism and not traditional religion. The leading ideology of the modern Labour movements, Socialism, was the last and most extreme descendant of eighteenth century rationalism.<sup>115</sup> Moreover, the working classes, supporters of the Labour movements, were affected less by traditional religion than other social groups.<sup>116</sup> They were not necessarily agnostic or atheistic. Rather

"the historical or individual step from village to town, or from peasant to worker,... led to a sharp reduction in the influence of traditional religions and churches."<sup>117</sup>

More significantly, the leaders and militants of Socialism were not merely religiously indifferent but actively agnostic, atheist or anti-clerical.<sup>118</sup> Although in the modern Labour movements the fashions of traditional religion did not suddenly and completely disappear - there was often "nostalgia" for the old religions<sup>119</sup> - this was the result of people's inability to conceive of new ideologies which did not conform with the patterns of the old.<sup>120</sup> Still, while the new Socialist movement could fulfil some of the functions of traditional religions, for the most part secularism triumphed.

The British experience, however, was slightly different from that of the Continent. The links between traditional religion and the Labour and Socialist movements were close and lasted for longer than in most other European countries. Thus, for example, the German scholar, F Linden writing in 1932, found that of 249 British Labour MPs whose religious affiliations were investigated only eight openly declared themselves to be agnostic or atheist.<sup>121</sup>

Primitive Methodism was in some respects a Labour sect but its influence on the British Labour movement did not extend much beyond providing a school of democracy where working men learned evangelistic propaganda techniques and organisational skills.<sup>122</sup> And anyway, this kind of religion was what E P Thompson later labelled the "chiliasm of despair".<sup>123</sup> It mirrored the situation of working people and through it the proletariat evaded the reality that economic conditions were the root of their problems.<sup>124</sup> Sectarian religion was a superstitious way of viewing economic conditions as divinely ordained and it emphasised individual salvation not class solidarity. Politically, the sectarian got only two things out of his religion: patience "and a sort of etherealized revenge as he looked for the wrath to come."<sup>125</sup>

In any case, Hobsbawm continues, Primitive Methodism was only a pseudo-Labour sect. In the Labour sect proper, membership was drawn primarily from wage earners and, in

addition, the entire sect was tied completely to Labour and the trade unions, not to religion.<sup>126</sup> More importantly, although the Labour sect sometimes searched for a religious doctrine and organisation which reflected the fate of the workers it was, fundamentally, an attempt to express the collective aspirations of the workers as a class.<sup>127</sup> The only example of such a Labour sect in late nineteenth century Britain was the Labour Church. The Labour Church fulfilled a religious function for its adherents and could thus appear quite natural in the late nineteenth century environment. It was nevertheless an "odd"<sup>128</sup> movement and in reality was little more than a stepping stone from Liberal radicalism to Independent Labour representation. The Labour Church was a stage on the road to the foundation of a rational and secular Labour Party. Its theology "is difficult to describe because it hardly existed. It was certainly not Christian in any traditional sense."<sup>129</sup>

It is not the purpose of this thesis to provide a detailed refutation of Hobsbawm's explanation of religion. There are, however, a number of points about the Marxist view of the relationship between religion and Socialist Revivalism in late nineteenth-early twentieth century Britain which are worth making.

Even if we accept Hobsbawm's claim that the Labour Church was a purely Labour sect because it was tied to the Labour movement, it is by no means clear that the late nineteenth



century Labour and Socialist movements were modern because they were secular. Hobsbawm's claim that the Religion of Socialism (of which the Labour Church was an important manifestation) was inherently this-worldly, materialist and secular, and therefore inconsistent with Christianity and not really religious at all must be treated with scepticism. Indeed, the Labour Church appeared natural because it was rooted in Evangelical-mission culture and was therefore not odd. Although Socialist Revivalism emphasised "practical Christianity" and tended to avoid metaphysical speculation about God, its vision of social salvation in this world cannot be taken as confirmation of an inherent secularism or materialism. The assumption of this argument is that Christianity is (and was) mainly other-worldly. But by no means all Christians have accepted that salvation and heaven will be located outside of earth and in the hereafter. On the contrary, time and again Christian millenarians, including the first Christians, have looked for and foretold the coming of the Kingdom and salvation for mankind on earth and in the here-and-now. It is in this millenarian tradition that we must place Socialist Revivalism.

From the 1890s to 1914 the principal ILP newspaper, the Labour Leader, although mainly concerned to educate party members in politics, economics and electoral tactics, and to report on party events and activities, provided plenty of discussion on the Religion of Socialism.<sup>130</sup> The Leader

gave much publicity to criticism of the "organised hypocrisy" of the institutional churches (in much the same vein as dissenters and millenarians had always condemned allegedly corrupt established religion) but it never had an official anti-religious stance or policy. Instead, it favoured the "Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man" as constituting the true heart of religion - a true heart which beat in the Labour and Socialist movements not in institutional churches. Militant atheism, irreligion or secularism were not top of the ILP agenda. ILP leaders Keir Hardie, Philip Snowden, Arthur Henderson, John Bruce Glasier and James Ramsay MacDonald, men who not only dominated the pre-1918 ILP but later the Labour Party, were each in their own way deeply religious.<sup>131</sup> Keir Hardie summed up majority opinion in the ILP and encapsulated the crux of non-Marxist mainstream Socialist Revivalism when he asserted that "the only way you can serve God is by serving mankind. There is no other way."<sup>132</sup> Henderson and Snowden were steeped in Methodism. It was the root both of their political outlook and their political characters. For Henderson, as for so many ILPers, the Labour movement was almost "the last of the religious crusades from which England would arise and a New Jerusalem be found"<sup>133</sup>

Examples of the religious outlook and millenarianism of late nineteenth century British Labour and Socialist leaders are so common that it is secularism and materialism that appear odd. Secularism and materialism stand out

because they were not the hallmark of the late Victorian British Labour movement or of Socialist Revivalism. Moreover, the Religion of Socialism as embodied in the ILP was not wholly this-worldly. The "hidden hand" of "History" and "the People" as vehicles of Socialism were ascribed supernatural status in the Socialist scheme of things. There was no separation between material and spiritual, or between politics and religion. In this respect, Socialist Revivalism gained much of its integrity from being firmly inside the framework of Evangelicalism. The American heiress, Elizabeth Evans, displayed a remarkable perception of Socialist Revivalism in Britain when she described the Bruce Glasiers as "Early Christians".<sup>134</sup> Socialist Revivalists looked to the imminent arrival of a New Age as successor to the Present Age. Moreover, and crucially, their outlook betrayed an ambivalence towards individualism, an ambivalence which Socialist Revivalism shared with Evangelicalism because it was itself a product of Evangelicalism. There was little to distinguish Socialists' argument that to create a Socialist country one had to win converts to Socialism from Evangelicals' view that to have a Christian country one needed to convert individuals.<sup>135</sup> Or, to put the matter the other way round, Socialists urged that men could not attain freedom apart from society but only in and through society. Only in a community working not for profit but for the good of the whole could man really become free. But had not Thomas Chalmers, for example, sought to put a version of

this argument into practice? Individualism was an important feature of Evangelicalism but it was never considered as individualism apart from society.

Socialist Revivalism was neither an aberration in the progress towards a secular Labour Party nor simply a surrogate religion. It was proof positive of the diffusion and deep-rootedness of Evangelicalism in culture, and of the power which Evangelicalism could exercise in areas where the churches were unable or unwilling to recognise the fruits of their work. Socialist Revivalism was tied to Evangelicalism. It was not parallel to Evangelical religion for the whole point about parallel lines is that they never meet. The Socialist Revival came from deep within Evangelical-mission culture - hence the seriousness of its challenge - and blossomed at just the point when Evangelicalism seemed to be declining and churchmen themselves were concerned about falling church attendances, non-churchgoing and the failure of the voluntary/ameliorative approach to social problems.

It is arguable that

"a widespread abandoning of churchgoing habits, however conspicuous as a social problem, has relatively little to do with the currency of basic religious beliefs and values. Perhaps what is often described as 'secularisation' represents a metamorphosis of religion rather than a decline."<sup>136</sup>

Henry Pelling has suggested that the Labour Church and, by implication, the Religion of Socialism was a symptom of a more general decline in religion.<sup>137</sup> Although there is some

truth in this, Pelling has failed to point out that during the late nineteenth century Labourism was the instrument of Socialist Revivalism and that with the decline of Socialist Revivalism Labourism became an end in itself. Socialist Revivalism, because it was attached to Evangelicalism declined along with it and, consequently, Labourism was left as the ideology of disappointed Socialist millenarianism. The Labour Party became the party of disappointed millenarians. (This partly explains why Linden in 1932 was hard-pressed to find atheists or agnostics among the 249 Labour MPs he surveyed.) Even if we were to accept that the Religion of Socialism was transitional, an expression of working class aspirations through the medium of religious ideology (in the Hobsbawm/Marxist sense), then at the very least the timescale of the transitional period needs to be revised. It was not, as Yeo suggests, confined to the 1890s. This is a point made by Fred Reid in his short study of Socialist Sunday schools in Britain, 1892-1939.<sup>138</sup> These, he argues, constituted a Labour sect in Hobsbawm's terms, cognate with the Labour churches but organisationally and geographically distinct from them and therefore representing an extension of working class sectarianism at least until the First World War. The Socialist Sunday schools sprang from the same conditions as the Labour Church and shared the same ethical outlook. But the Sunday schools were not just a sideshow. Originating in West-Central Scotland, rather than in the North of England where

the Labour Church was born, the Socialist Sunday school movement aimed to convert British youth to the Religion of Socialism, extending and inheriting the position of the Labour Church.<sup>139</sup> The Labour churches spread across Britain but were always to remain most influential in Northern England. They adopted the organisational pattern of English nonconformity, especially Primitive Methodism. The Socialist Sunday schools also spread throughout Britain. Numerically London, because of its sheer size, dominated the movement. However, the deepest and most lasting impact came in and from West Central Scotland. In this region, the rise of Socialist Sunday schools had been preceded by nearly a century of Church dominated Sunday school activity. The Sunday school movement, argues Callum Brown, was the largest single youth movement ever seen in Scotland.

"More than any other religious organisation it displayed the strength and rigour of Victorian Evangelicalism. Politically the movement became one of the largest pressure groups in nineteenth century Scotland."<sup>140</sup>

The Sunday school movement, at least in so far as it was aimed at the working classes, peaked during the 1870s and declined thereafter.<sup>141</sup> The Socialist Sunday schools spread at just the point where, Brown thinks, Evangelical hegemony was breaking up. They can thus be seen as part of the challenge to Evangelicalism.

However, there is an alternative view; namely, that the Socialist Sunday schools were an effective challenge to the church-based Sunday schools at the point where Evangelical hegemony diminished precisely because Socialist Sunday schools were pervaded by Evangelicalism. They were not militantly atheistic, secular or radically this-worldly. On the contrary, as Reid has shown, Socialist Sunday schools were part of that "ambiguous moment" of Thompson's which lasted not just until the mid-'90s but at least until 1914. Socialist Sunday schools were another example of popular millenarianism; they gave further expression to a popular religious consciousness. And this was a consciousness which in nineteenth century Scotland had always been markedly this-worldly, as the conflicts over Church government illustrated.

Socialist Sunday schools were recognisable on the extremities of Evangelical-mission culture. They were not, as Reid argues, just giving expression to working class aspirations but "in the garb of traditional Christian ethics".<sup>142</sup> Indeed, Reid himself points out that from the 1890s until the early 1920s the Socialist Sunday school movement remained essentially a communion of believers in the Religion of Socialism, a sect.

"If it seems strange to us that people should... have entertained its aim of conversion of a new generation we should bear in mind the tradition of religious dissent in Britain dating from the seventeenth century. Since then, religion and politics had been inseparable in the minds of many."<sup>143</sup>



And nowhere more was this the case than in Calvinist, Presbyterian dominated Scotland. Furthermore, here too the Evangelical and Socialist Revivalist ambivalence towards individualism was highly visible.

The Fulfilment of Christianity - The Socialist  
Revival and the ILP in Scotland

Donald C Smith has argued that during the nineteenth century the mainstream Presbyterian churches in Scotland failed to make any effective prophetic protest against social evils caused by capitalism and individualism.<sup>144</sup> Calvinist theology joined hands with laissez-faire economics and the churches stood in defence of the status quo. They made virtually no attempt to form or transform public opinion or to stir-up the national social conscience. The clergy were in effect little more than chaplains in the fortresses of power, wealth and privilege. They did not champion the causes of the poor, oppressed and underprivileged and, indeed, often opposed such causes. The churches' "deification" of existing social and economic arrangements "precluded the possibility of [their] engaging in any genuine social criticism."<sup>145</sup>

In the last quarter of the century this situation began to change and the influence of Socialism was important in



precipitating change.<sup>146</sup> Before the 1880s the churches were hostile to Socialism because they viewed it as leading to materialism and secularism. However, doubts and anxieties about the effectiveness of the Evangelical analysis of and solutions to urban social problems in the 1870s and '80s created an environment more favourable to acceptance of Socialist ideas, especially to those of the Ethical Socialism of the ILP.<sup>147</sup>

Recently, Smith's thesis has been gaining acceptance among many contemporary Scottish churchmen and historians,<sup>148</sup> and indeed, there is much in Smith's work with which it is difficult to disagree. However, it should not be accepted uncritically. Smith has placed too much emphasis on Calvinism as culprit.

"not just Calvinism was at fault for in country after country, whatever the ecclesiastical set-up, the operations of the Dismal Science [political economy] in the nineteenth century produced similar results."<sup>149</sup>

Although the Scottish churches endorsed the social and economic arrangements of the society of which they were a part this did not mean that they necessarily bore false witness. Smith's analysis is anachronistic and it does not help us to understand Evangelicalism in Scotland in its own terms and context. It is not surprising that the Scottish churches upheld political economy, because the strength of political economy in the nineteenth century "was that its

doctrines were not held to be doctrines but facts, part of the ordinary everyday business of living."<sup>150</sup> The Scottish churches did not offer a critique of industrial capitalism or of existing social and economic relations because they did not see the root of social problems in environmental but in spiritual terms. Where the social policies of the churches were characterised by individualism and voluntarism this was because these were thought to be the best means of changing society (given that real transformation could not come about unless people became real Christians - and this was a decision which had to be made by individuals). Evangelicalism harboured a real conviction that salvation in the here and hereafter could be attained by all men through the Church, and it fostered compassion, sympathy and tolerance as much as intolerance or harshness.<sup>151</sup>

S J Brown, damning Smith with faint praise, has made similar points. Brown has argued that by portraying the history of prophetic social criticism in Scottish Presbyterianism "as the Church's progress from the darkness of nineteenth century Liberalism to the light of twentieth century Labourism",<sup>152</sup> Smith has presented an oversimplified picture. He has not viewed church personalities in the context of their own times and has presented them "as either heroes or villains according to whether or not they identified with working class aspirations."<sup>153</sup> The result of this approach is that the villains include nearly

all the early Victorian Evangelicals who were uncomfortable with social divisiveness.<sup>154</sup> The community building efforts of Chalmers or Guthrie are thus dismissed as mere paternalism intended to uphold property and class-privilege.<sup>155</sup> But Smith's harsh treatment of Evangelicals

"makes it difficult to understand their widespread popularity or the enduring strength of Evangelical Liberalism in Scotland up to at least the First World War."<sup>156</sup>

This is a key point. It highlights the fact that the Evangelical liaison with individualism and laissez-faire had always been highly ambivalent. Indeed, this ambivalence was by no means confined to the churches. As J P Parry has shown, it has come to be seen as anachronistic to organise accounts of Victorian party politics, 1830-1890, around concepts of "interventionism" or laissez-faire, "collectivism" or "individualism".

"Much state intervention in these years was uncontroversial and inspired by ad hoc responses to problems. The wisdom of other measures was disputed, but not, usually, because of doctrinaire opposition to the propriety of government interference in its citizens' affairs."<sup>157</sup>

The churches' responses to social problems and the moves away from voluntaryism in late century must be seen against this background of increasing state intervention as, indeed, must the rise of Socialism.

This brings us once again to Callum Brown's contention that there was a discontinuity between Labour prophecy and Evangelicalism; the connections between the two were superficial.

There can be no doubt that from the '80s and '90s there was a movement among the churches towards criticism of capitalism and a new awareness that it was no longer acceptable to attribute poverty and deprivation solely to individuals' moral and spiritual weakness. However, the churches' sought a rejuvenation of Evangelicalism, not its abandonment. They wanted to push the balance of Evangelicalism in a collectivist direction. The new social teachings and liberal theology, influenced by and responding to criticism from Socialists, were every bit as much a religious as a political or vaguely humanitarianism response. Serious attempts were made to redefine older idealisms.

"there was much searching around in the social and welfare principles enunciated in the sixteenth centuries... to meet the strains of... new social and political situations."<sup>158</sup>

Moreover, it would be misleading to suggest that the voluntary/ameliorative approach to social welfare was rapidly pushed aside by Labour prophecy. The existing form of welfare philosophy persisted until well on into the twentieth century and continued to enjoy considerable support and influence.<sup>159</sup> Crucially, the ambivalence of the

Evangelical approach to individualism and laissez-faire was a particular feature of Socialist Revivalism in Scotland and this was most obvious in the Scottish ILP. Scottish ILPers were rarely conscious of the tension between their demands for collectivism and state intervention and their equally urgent conviction in the necessity of converting individuals to Socialism. Ironically, because the Socialists were only ever a tiny band, ILP missionaries, leaders and rank-and-file members were highly individualistic people. Their status as outsiders and rebels demanded it.<sup>160</sup>

Graham Walker has argued that Scottish Liberalism had been nourished by a rich tradition of Presbyterian radical individualism.<sup>161</sup> Liberalism was then challenged by an emerging Labour movement "which attempted to steer the same Presbyterian radical impulse in a collectivist direction." [my emphasis]<sup>162</sup> Until 1918 the Labour movement in Scotland, particularly the ILP was largely "Protestant in its make-up and Protestant in its mentality."<sup>162</sup> [my emphasis]

But Walker fails to appreciate the real significance of these comments for he does not see that they illustrate that the Socialist Revivalism of the ILP was rooted in Evangelical Protestantism. The attempt to steer the Presbyterian radical impulse in a collectivist direction not only ensured that the ILP inherited an ambivalent

attitude towards individualism; it also suggests that ILP Socialism was not a wholly new ideology. It was innovatory precisely because it could be located on the Evangelical continuum. Labour prophecy in Scotland was not innovation created ex nihilo. It was modification of the Evangelical Presbyterian tradition and that tradition was its raw material. What was new was that from the 1880s as the churches increased their support for state intervention and began to listen to Socialists and trades unions, tension between Labour and the churches eased a little. A general rapprochement began to develop. Moreover, the influence of religion on politicised workers - an influence which had been part and parcel of working class politics since the beginning of the century - meant that emphasis was placed by the Labour movement on brotherly love and social justice not on class hatred.<sup>164</sup> By contrast, the secularism of revolutionary Marxism alienated it from the workers and from the Scottish Labour leadership.<sup>165</sup> It was

"the eclectic, elitist and Calvinist ILP, and not Marxists, which had the decisive say in Scottish working class politics."<sup>166</sup>

However, although a rapprochement between Labour and the churches was in the making after the 1880s it would be wrong to say that tension or antagonism suddenly and completely disappeared. Indeed, in some respects it intensified; because while the churches responded to Socialist criticism of institutional religion, that

criticism did not then evaporate. Nor did the churches suddenly jettison older, well-tried Evangelical analyses and methods.

In his exploration of the emergence of a new social conscience among the Scottish churches, 1870-1900, D J Withrington has pointed out that in addition to criticism from Socialists one of the main factors pushing the churches towards reassessment of their position was continuing and increasing non-churchgoing. The old plea of the 1820s and '30s - that non-churchgoing was the result of maldistribution of churches and a general lack of accommodation - would no longer do.<sup>167</sup> New answers to questions on the reasons for non-churchgoing had to be found. As enquiries proceeded through the 1870s and '80s the churches' willingness to admit that the ameliorative approach to poverty and deprivation needed to be reconsidered produced some novel suggestions. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1888 heard from Glasgow Presbytery that the Church must look to environmental and economic circumstances as the root cause of social ills and of non-churchgoing among the poor and working classes. The Assembly was told that the Church had to create a right public opinion and that it had more to do for the lapsed masses

"than to assault them with armies of district visitors and to shower upon them tracts and good advices, while... leaving them to swelter under conditions



where Christian life is difficult, if not impossible to realise."<sup>168</sup>

This was a far cry from the older notion of the working classes and the poor winning through by their own efforts using the three "levers" of self-respect, self-reliance and self-control.<sup>169</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of a growing openness to new social analyses, the churches displayed a hesitancy about committing themselves to action on social problems and because of this they still came across as antagonistic towards the causes of the working classes and the poor.<sup>170</sup> At the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1887 a special report, by the Committee on Christian Life and Work, on the lapsed masses while acknowledging that

"the physical and social condition of the great majority of the Churchless and lapsed stands much in the way of the promotion of spiritual interests."<sup>171</sup>

suggested that more vigorous application of traditional methods was needed. It called for a combination of state action, voluntaryism and self-improvement. The Church was urged to do everything in its power to co-operate with sanitary and other authorities to have existing laws on public health enforced and to bring in new legislation. The poor and lapsed were exhorted to co-operate in their own self improvement. Drink was cited as a chief cause of poverty and the Church was urged to give support to the establishment of temperance cafes, reading rooms and



lectureships bearing on every-day experience for the social self improvement of the working classes. Above all, the report criticised the efforts of ministers, elders and members for their laxity in applying traditional Evangelical methods. It recommended that a new organisation of parish workers be set-up, drawn from congregations, to work among the churchless and lapsed. Every church member was to become a Home Missionary giving money, time and labour, and taking care to note the work of other denominations in the field so as to cooperate whenever possible.<sup>172</sup>

In June 1889, following yet another report on the causes of non-churchgoing to the Assembly, a special committee on the subject was formed.<sup>173</sup> This special committee recommended the prompt appointment of a Commission on the religious condition of the people of Scotland.<sup>174</sup> A Commission was duly constituted in June 1890 to visit and confer with Presbyteries and Synods.<sup>175</sup> It began its operations in November with a visit to Hamilton Presbytery. Hamilton Presbytery was recognised as having features of special interest to the Commissioners. It was (outside Glasgow Presbytery) the principal area of mining, iron and steel, had a dense population and had a predominance of (in the Church of Scotland) quoad sacra parishes.

"In Hamilton Presbytery... the Commissioners were brought into the most direct view of the attitude of the masses of people towards Christian life and worship. Nowhere could the efficiency and sufficiency

of the parochial economy be more thoroughly tested. Nowhere could it be more fully shown what elasticities of method seemed to be called for in order that the mission of the Church may be realised in congested parishes."<sup>176</sup>

The Commissioners were also brought into contact with the rougher side of the "labour question" for the visit to Hamilton Presbytery took place in the midst of a general strike of blast furnacemen.<sup>177</sup>

In its report the Commission noted "the lamentable prevalence of religious indifference"<sup>178</sup> in Hamilton Presbytery. It was claimed that the causes of indifference were so connected with social features and conditions, and with individual family circumstances, that accurate definition was almost impossible. Nevertheless, the Commissioners ventured a number of generalisations.<sup>179</sup>

First, heredity was a cause of religious indifference; people had not inherited a tradition of churchgoing from their immediate forefathers. Second, working life and labour conditions (for example, the shift work of miners, excessive tiredness and the need for a day of rest, Sunday labour) mitigated against church attendance. Third, the rise of mass leisure pursuits, especially football, occupied the attention of the working classes much more than did religion. Fourth, drinking and gambling were other major distractions and often associated with sporting pursuits. Intemperance, the Commissioners argued, was a

prolific source of misery in Hamilton Presbytery and "the main cause of religious indifference of the vast masses of the people."<sup>180</sup> Churches were urged to counter attack against intemperance and the encroachments of secular leisure activities by setting up clubs and societies of their own. Fifth, housing conditions were listed as another cause of religious indifference although on this point the Commissioners displayed the hesitancy of the Church in its approach to social problems.

"A degraded social surrounding is frequently caused by the habits of a degraded population; but it becomes also a cause of moral degradation which inevitably alienates its victims from all religious influence."<sup>181</sup>

Sixth, seat-rents, times and modes of worship, and a lack of church halls for clubs and leisure activities were all mentioned as contributing to non-churchgoing.

However, in spite of the high instance of religious indifference the Commissioners also noted that in Hamilton Presbytery

"the consensus of testimony was that speculative infidelity or agnosticism, in its most pronounced types, does not exercise a wide influence. There is little confessed unbelief or hostility to the Church and its ministrations."<sup>182</sup>

The report highlights problems which we now know faced all the churches throughout the country, particularly in urban

areas. Moreover, the account of the religious condition of the people of Hamilton Presbytery is in itself highly significant. Churchmen of the three main Presbyterian denominations were concerned that the industrial heartland of Scotland appeared to be increasingly dominated by religious indifference for the Central-West region was viewed as the churches' most natural constituency. It was the home of the majority of the nation's population and if the churches could not sustain and expand membership and activities in this part of the country then their very survival was threatened.<sup>183</sup> All the churches had expended enormous amounts of time, energy and money in seeking to win the support of people in this region. If the churches deserved success and were meant to succeed then here was where it should happen. In this respect, however, the churches differed little from the Independent Labour Party. Scottish ILP leaders were convinced that without the conversion of Lanarkshire (including Glasgow) Socialism and the party would not survive in Scotland. So for the churches and for the ILP, Central-West Scotland was the Promised Land. For the churches because here above all since the 1820s and '30s they had laboured and spent. Among ILPers because in predominantly working-class Central-West, they thought, Socialism was poised to cross over Jordan.

Consequently, antagonism between the churches and the ILP continued throughout the 1890s and early 1900s. The

churches feared that the ILP was out to take what rightly belonged to the Church; the ILP was stealing the Evangelical initiative. For its part, this is exactly what the ILP claimed it was and would continue doing. Scottish ILPers emphasised Thomas Chalmers' concept of the nascent religious consciousness of the people - but inverted it. William Stewart, Scottish Party Secretary (1912-1936) and frequent Scottish correspondent of the Labour Leader<sup>184</sup> claimed that the working classes did not go to church precisely because they were religious. In 'A Cardinal Question to Clergymen' (1904)<sup>185</sup> Stewart criticised the churches for being hesitant, reactionary and indifferent towards the great issues of social reform. These attitudes alienated the working classes from the churches which always seemed to side with the rich against the poor. The churches had been corrupted by the ruling classes. It was not Christianity per se that was at fault nor the workers.

"The Church... is a political and social institution; and it is on the wrong side. Therefore the workers are leaving the Church. This is a statement of fact verified by the continuous and pitiful reference of Church leaders to the lapsing of the masses, which they attribute to the sinfulness of the people rather than to its true cause, their lack of sympathy with the people [sic]"<sup>186</sup>

Furthermore, Stewart continued, perhaps the "highest testimony" to the "essentially religious strain in the Scottish character"<sup>187</sup> was that Scottish people, artisans and peasantry alike, were deserting the churches.

"And what the churches are losing Socialism is gaining; for moral fervour and sincerity must have an outlet and the socialist movement provides that outlet and gives practical opportunity for the virile expression of that eternal spirit of rebellion against wrong that inherent consciousness of human brotherhood which are fundamental to all genuine religious thought and life.<sup>188</sup>

Socialism was for Stewart

"in the highest and most lasting sense, the New Religion. Not a thing of supernatural and indefinable relationships but a faith that has in it the breath of life, and whose ideals are realisable by the whole human race. Socialism is therefore enlisting the enthusiasms which the churches have cast out.<sup>189</sup>

'A Cardinal Question' was a clear expression of ILP Evangelicalism and an unequivocal assertion that Socialism, as the New Religion, had wrested the Evangelical initiative and imperative from the churches. It was an open, and for the churches a worrying claim that there was space in Evangelical-mission culture into which the ILP was moving and a religious base - the inherent religious consciousness of the Scottish people - on which the ILP was building. For Stewart, the ILP was ready, willing and able to claim its inheritance as the fulfilment of failed institutional Christianity.

In a subsequent article condemning gambling and drinking among the working classes<sup>190</sup> Stewart took these arguments even further. He urged that the only cure for gambling, drunkenness and other intemperate behaviour, behaviour

which was an obstacle to workers' salvation, was Socialism. Yet this was exactly the same kind of claim that Evangelical churches has all along been making; the masses could only be saved and liberated by joining the Church. Many Labour historians have viewed the churches' claim in this respect as nothing more than a crude attempt to exercise social control. They have failed to note that in the eyes of Evangelicals, Christianity offered true liberation to the working class. They have also failed to note that William Stewart and other ILPers sought to exercise the very same "social control", and for similar reasons. A betting, drunken working man could not be a truly free man. He must become a Socialist and on doing so gambling and drinking had to cease. Only by joining the Socialist movement could the working classes be liberated and saved. Cure of souls was as important to Socialists as it was to Evangelicals.

However, as Stewart and other Scottish ILPers quickly discovered, Socialist Evangelicalism came up against precisely those problems and causes of indifference which afflicted the churches and this was because Socialist Revivalism was enmeshed in Evangelical-mission culture. The Established Church's Commission on the religious condition of the people had found that in the region embraced by Hamilton Presbytery there was no mass militant secularism, agnosticism, anti-churchism or determined irreligion. The ILP discovered that in the same region -



its natural constituency - there was no nascent Socialism either. As we shall see in Chapter Eleven, time and again the party in Lanarkshire suffered from false optimism for though the bulk of Lanarkshire's population was working class this did not mean that the people would necessarily become Socialist, ILP supporters.

Furthermore, the ILP found that universal claims (salvation for all mankind), appeals to national identity or to class solidarity foundered on the rocks of obdurate localism. In particular, at local level the ILP in Scotland did not necessarily have the weight of history on its side.

By contrast the cultural investment of Evangelicalism in the industrial communities, especially during the 1830s and '40s, paid dividends right down to 1914 and beyond. Evangelicalism was instrumental in the creation of new community identities during the early nineteenth century and thereafter it nourished and then relied on localism, and positively encouraged local religious competitiveness. Far from weakening the churches, Evangelical competitiveness and rivalry kept religion high on the agenda of local concerns and popular discussion because it enabled church members and adherents to think about and defend their positions publicly. For all denominations, the aggressive system worked best at local level and ensured that the diffusion of Evangelicalism in culture was pronounced and effective even although by the close of the



century the churches themselves often failed to recognise it. Evangelical competitiveness expressed people's commitment and enthusiasm. It was responsible for the feverish church building in villages, towns and cities all over the country. It promoted fierce rivalry within a denomination within a single town or village. But this was not, as is often claimed, negative and destructive. Inter-church warfare could be in deadly earnest and vicious, as the Voluntary Controversy or the Disruption illustrated, but it could also be good fun, exhilarating and challenging. Christ and the gospel were not lost sight of because Evangelical competitiveness and interdenominational confrontation served as a framework for witness.

As was noted in Chapter One, in Scotland church government was the most important area of popular religious dispute and debate. However, even when ecclesiological controversy abated as the century wore on this did not herald the end of inter-church rivalry, especially at local level. Individual churches did not willingly shed the traditions which had shaped their particular identities. Evangelical competitiveness continued to be expressed, as it had always been expressed, in mundane, everyday terms; for example, the determination of each congregation to ensure that its voluntary organisations were more numerous and wider in scope than those of any other congregation.

More importantly, in communities where the symbolic boundaries of local identity had been decisively affected by a particular, dominant denominational tradition, ecumenism as embodied in the reunions of 1900 or 1929 did not destroy loyalty to that particular inheritance.

For its part the ILP often ignored localism and even when the thrust of its propagandist activities was pitched at local level it was often unable to marshal local feeling in the way that the churches could because it lacked the cultural investment that the churches had to draw on. Consequently, in communities where Evangelicalism was still strong at the end of the nineteenth century, where its decline was relative and slow, and where those members of the working classes most likely to join the ILP were either still heavily involved in the churches and Evangelical voluntary organisations or indifferent to all forms of Evangelicalism, then Socialist Revivalism could simply be blocked out. The claim to be the fulfilment of Christianity was unimpressive because there was no space for Socialist Revivalism in local Evangelical-mission culture, especially when Socialists were offering an all too familiar revivalist message. Moreover, ILP Evangelicalism was forced to compete while all the time supposedly rejecting competition. It had to fight and be fought for every inch of the way; town by town, street by street, and soul by soul. And this was a discovery that was forced on the party not just by the exigencies of

electoral politics but by the realities of working within Evangelical-mission culture.

William Knox has argued that it is a mistake to describe the Scottish working class political culture and tradition in the nineteenth century in terms of phases: an early Victorian radicalism; a mid-Victorian consensus in which radicalism "degenerated" into class collaboration, and a late Victorian rediscovery of radicalism including the rise of the Labour and Socialist movements.<sup>191</sup> Emphasis must be given instead to the continuity of working class political culture and tradition "while at the same time recognising that the tradition was open to a continuous process of renegotiation and redefinition."<sup>192</sup> Knox has also suggested that the strength of Scottish working class political culture and tradition lay with the social ethos which "underscored" it "of which religion, temperance and the culture of respectability were elemental parts"<sup>193</sup> Together, these produced a cross-class shared value system which imprinted itself on the development of Socialism in Scotland.<sup>194</sup> Indeed, Knox thinks that Socialist Revivalism campaigned as a new religion, and for temperance and respectability as strategies of moral improvement.<sup>195</sup>

However, Knox's analysis is too rigid and somewhat evasive. He has separated into "elemental parts" what really ought to be seen as a whole. Religion, temperance and the culture of respectability were not self-contained entities.

They were mutually inclusive, overlapping. And, more important, it was Evangelicalism which underpinned and gave coherence to religion, temperance and the culture of respectability unifying them into a world-view and shared value system. Even if it is accepted that Evangelicalism in general began to go into decline during the last quarter of the nineteenth century this does not mean that the rate of decline or of the secularisation process was uniformly rapid in all localities up and down the country. And before we can assess the depth of the penetration of Evangelicalism, or decide whether or when it went into decline in a particular community, we need to look at two things: first, at the history of religion in that discrete community over a period much longer than 1880-1914; second, at the role of religion in the cultural and symbolic construction of that community and of its contribution to that community's discreteness.

The continuity and diffusion of Evangelicalism also helps to explain the continuity of the Scottish working class political culture and tradition, particularly at local level, and this continuity was not advantageous to the ILP. In Airdrie, as we shall see, the ILP was up against a local culture and tradition which had been remoulded and reinvigorated between the 1790s and the 1840s by Evangelicalism and dissent.

## Notes

1. For British Trades Unionism in the nineteenth century see:  
  
Henry Pelling, A History of British Trades Unionism, Penguin, London, 1976 edn.
2. For the Third Reform Act see:  
  
E J Feuchtwanger, Democracy and Empire: Britain, 1865-1914, Edward Arnold, London, 1985, Chapter 5, pp 147-191.
3. Kenneth O Morgan, 'People and Power', in Lesley M Smith, The Making of Britain: Echoes of Greatness, MacMillan, London, 1988, p 113.
4. For the crisis in Victorian confidence see:  
  
E J Feuchtwanger, op cit, Chapter 4, 'The 1880s: Victorian Confidence Falters', pp 112-146.
5. Morgan, op cit, p 114.
6. On the Labour aristocracy see:  
  
Robert Gray, The Labour Aristocracy in Nineteenth Century Britain, c 1850-1916, MacMillan, London, 1981.
7. For New Unionism and the politicisation of trades unions see:  
  
Henry Pelling, A History of British Trades Unionism, Chapter 6, 'New Unionism and New Politics, 1880-1900', pp 93-122.  
  
Henry Pelling, The Origins of the Labour Party, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965, Chapter V, 'The Impact of New Unionism', pp 78-98.
8. See, for example, Jonathan Schneer's life of Ben Tillett: Ben Tillett: Portrait of a Labour Leader, Croom Helm, London, 1982. Tillett rose to fame as militant unionist and Socialist when leading the London dock strike of 1889. He was a congregationalist.
9. Pelling, A History of British Trades Unionism, Chapter 6.  
  
Ross McKibbin, The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910-1924, Oxford University Press, 1983, pp xv-xvi.

10. Morgan, op cit, pp 114-115.
11. For accounts and interpretations of the three Socialist groupings see:

Pelling, The Origins of the Labour Party, Chapter II, 'The Socialist Revival', pp 13-37. Chapter III, 'The Socialist Debate on Strategy', pp 38-61. Chapter vi, 'The Emergence of the National ILP', pp 99-124.

Antony Wright, British Socialism: Socialist Thought from the 1880s to 1960s, Longman, London, 1983, Introduction, p 1-28.

Geoffrey Foote, The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History, Croom Helm, London, 1985, Part Two, 'The Formation of British Socialism', esp pp 19-71.

12. For a detailed account, analyses and interpretations of the emergence and growth of the ILP see:

David Howell, British Workers and the Independent Labour Party, 1888-1906, Manchester University Press, 1983.

13. Howell, op cit, p 333, notes, however, that many skilled workers and tradesman who made up the core of the party membership were far from affluent. He warns against stereotyping ILPers as "white collar socialists" too easily influenced by lower middle/middle class reformism.

By contrast, Carl Levy argues that the white collar Socialists of the ILP,

"socialised an older tradition of professional reformism and generally speaking socialist inclined manual workers accepted this ideology."

[ 'Education and Self-education: Staffing the Early ILP', Socialism and the Intelligentsia 1880-1914, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1987, p 185.

See also:

Deian Hopkin, 'The Membership of the Independent Labour Party, 1904-1910: A Spatial and Occupational Analysis', in International Review of Social History, Volume 20, 1975, p 74-197.

14. See Howell, op cit.  
Levy, op cit.
15. For the relationship between labour and the Liberal Party and Liberalism, see:

Pelling, The Origins...; Howell, op cit; McKibbin, op cit.

Keith Laybourn, The Rise of Labour, Edward Arnold, London, 1988, Chapter 2, 'The Rise of Labour and the Decline of Liberalism, 1890-1918', pp 9-31.

K O Morgan, Keir Hardie: Radical and Socialist, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1984.

16. Accounts of negotiations leading to the formation of the LRC:

Pelling, The Origins..., Chapter X, 'The Conversion of the Unions', pp 192-215.

McKibbin, op cit, Introduction, pp xiii-xviii.

Morgan, Keir Hardie, Chapter VI, 'Boer War and Khaki Election (1899-1901)', pp 104-124.

17. For background to elections of 1900 and 1906:

Feuchtenwanger, op cit, Chapter 8, 'The Liberals in Power', pp 273-345.

18. McKibbin, op cit, p 1.

19. Morgan, 'People and Power', in Smith, op cit, p 116.

20. For the reorganisation of the Labour Party in 1918 see:

McKibbin, op cit, and esp. Chapter V, 'War and the New Social Order, 1914-1918', pp 88-111.

21. Ibid, p 105.

and, Ben Pimlott, Labour and the Left in the 1930s, Allen and Unwin, London, 1986, p 42.

22. For a full exposition of the Labourism thesis, see:

Geoffrey Foote, op cit, Part One, 'Labourism and the Labour Party', pp 1-16.

and McKibbin, op cit.

23. Foote, op cit, p 6.

24. Ibid, p 11.

25. Ibid, p14.



26. This is the essence of both Foote and McKibbin's works.
27. McKibbin, op cit, p 247.
28. Ibid, p 244.
29. Ibid, p 247.  
See also: Pimlott, op cit, esp. Conclusion, pp 194-198.
30. For post-1918 ILP, see:  
McKibbin, op cit, esp. Chapters VII, VIII and IX, pp 124-225; Pimlott, op cit, esp. pp 42-43.
31. Howell, op cit.
32. Morgan, Keir Hardie, p 109.
33. Ibid, p 109.
34. Ibid, p 109.
35. Ibid, p 109-110.
36. Ibid, p 109-110.
37. Ibid, p 110.
38. Accounts and interpretations of Ethical Socialism see:  
Wright, op cit, Introduction.  
Foote, op cit, Chapter 2, 'Marxists, Fabians and Ethical Socialists: The Traditions of British Socialism', pp 19-39.  
Laurence Thompson, The Enthusiasts: A Biography of John and Katherine Bruce Glasier, Gollancz, London, 1971.
39. As quoted in Laybourn, op cit, p 92.  
See also: Pimlott, op cit, p 78.
40. Morgan, 'People in Power', in Smith, op cit, p 113.
41. K O Morgan, Labour in Power, 1945-1951, Oxford University Press, 1984, pp 91-10.
42. Joseph Clayton, The Rise and Decline of Socialism in Great Britain, 1884-1924, Faber and Faber, London, 1926.



43. Clayton, op cit, pp vii-viii.
44. Ibid, p vii.
45. Ibid, p 86.
46. Ibid, p x.
47. Ibid, p 72 and p 76.

For the Labour churches see:

David F Summers, 'The Labour churches and Allied movements in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Edinburgh University, 1958.

Henry Pelling, The Origins..., Chapter, VII, 'Labour and the churches', pp 125-144.

48. Philip Snowden, 'The Christ that is to be', Extract in, Keith Laybourn, The Labour Party, 1881-1951: A Reader in History, Alan Sutton, London, 1988, p 43.
49. Stephen Yeo, 'A New Life: The Religion of Socialism in Britain, 1883-1896', in History Workshop Journal, 4, Autumn, 1977, pp 5-56.
50. Yeo, op cit, pp 6-7.
51. Ibid, p 7.
52. Ibid, p 7.
53. Ibid, p 8, 9 and 17.
54. Ibid, p 8.
55. Ibid, p 10.
56. Ibid, p 10.
57. Ibid, p 8.
58. Ibid, pp 19, 20 and 27.
59. Ibid, p 8.
60. Ibid, p 10-13.
61. Ibid, p 10.
62. Ibid, p 10.
63. Ibid, p 10.

64. Howell, op cit, Chapter 15, Section 2, 'The Intellectual Basis of the ILP, p 358.
65. Ibid, p 358.
66. Ibid, p 358.
67. Ibid, p 358.
68. Yeo, op cit, p 15.
69. Ibid, pp 13-14.
70. Ibid, pp 13-14.
71. Philip Snowden, 'The Two Salvations', Labour Prophet, April, 1898, Extract in, Laybourn, The Labour Party, p 41.

See also:

Keith Laybourn, Philip Snowden: A Biography, Temple Smith, London, 1988, Esp. Chapter 4, '"The Realising of the Kingdom of Heaven on Earth" - Philip Snowden and the Keighly ILP', pp 33-48.

72. Philip Snowden, 'The Two Salvations', quoted in Laybourn, The Labour Party, p 41.
73. Yeo, op cit, p 17.
74. Ibid, p 18.
75. Ibid. Summary of the Six Elements, pp 18-19. Exposition of the Six Elements, pp 19-23.
76. Ibid, p 28.
77. Ibid, p 31.
78. Ibid, p 38.
79. Ibid, p 31 and pp 41-49.
80. Ibid, p 31.
81. Ibid, p 31.
82. Ibid, p 46.
83. Howell, op cit, p 12.
84. Even though there were many doubts and anxieties.  
See:

J F C Harrison, Late Victorian Britain, 1875-1901, Fontana Press, London, 1990, Chapter 5, 'Certainties', pp 95-119 and Chapter 6, 'Doubts and Anxieties', pp 120-138.

85. See, Stephen Yeo, Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis, Croom Helm, London, 1976.

86. See, for example, Robert Roberts, The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the [Twentieth] Century, Pelican, London, 1973.

"Before 1914 the great majority in the lower working class were ignorant of Socialist doctrine in any form whether 'Christian' or Marxist. Generally, those who did come into contact with such ideas showed either indifference or, more often, hostility." (p 28)

Cf, W J Fishman, East End, 1888, Duckworth, London, 1988.

87. Robert Tressell, The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, Laurence and Wishart, London, 1955 Edn.

88. Stephen Yeo, 'The Religion of Socialism', letter replying to criticism from Royden Harrison, History Workshop Journal, Volume 7, 1979, p 217.

89. Ibid, p 217.

90. Ibid, p 217.

91. Werner Jaeger, Early Christianity and Greek Paideia, Harvard University Press, 1961, p 6.

92. Ibid, p 27.

93. Ibid, p 99.

94. David Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s, Unwin-Hyman, London, 1989, p 151.

95. Victor Bailey, '"In Darkest England and the Way Out": The Salvation Army, Social Reform and the Labour movement, 1885-1910', in International Review of Social History, Volume 29, 1984, pp 133-171.

96. Ibid, p 133.

97. Ibid, p 134.

98. Ibid, p 134.

99. Ibid, p 135.

100. Ibid, p 135.
101. Ibid, p 135.
102. Ibid, p 135.
103. Ibid, p 135.
104. Ibid, p 137.
105. Yeo, 'A New Life...', p 13.
106. Ibid, p 14.
107. Ibid, p 30-31.
108. For a short account of Marxism and Religion (especially Christianity) see: David McLellan, Marxism and Religion, MacMillan, London, 1987.
109. E J Hobsbawm, The Age of Capital, 1848-1875, Cardinal/Sphere, London, 1988, p 317.
110. Ibid, p 321.
111. Ibid, pp 317-318.
112. Ibid, pp 320.
113. E J Hobsbawm, Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social movement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Chapter VIII: 'The Labour Sects', Manchester University Press, 1959, pp 126-150.
114. Ibid, p 126.
115. Ibid, p 126.
116. Ibid, p 126-127.
117. Ibid, p 126-127.
118. Ibid, p 126-127.
119. Ibid, p 127.
120. Ibid, p 127.
121. Ibid, p 128.
122. Ibid, p 140.
123. See: E P Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class, Penguin, London, 1968.

124. Hobsbawm, 'The Labour Sects...', p 131.

125. Ibid, p 133.

126. Ibid, pp 133-134.

127. Ibid, p 134.

128. Ibid, p 142.

129. Ibid, pp 142-143.

130. Some examples from Labour Leader:

21, 28 December 1901

Articles by Hall Caine arguing that

"the Labour programme is a profoundly religious  
and Christian propaganda" (28.12.01, p 413)

August 30, 1902, p 275

Letters to the editor under the heading 'Religion of  
the Labour movement'.

January 17, 1903, p 18.

Under Causerie section

'Can A Man be A Christian?'

p 20, Advertisement for Keir Hardie's 'Can a Man Be A  
Christian On A Pound A Week?', billed as a pamphlet  
"for Christian friends".

p 21, Article, Keir Hardie, 'The New Gospel'.

August 1, 1903, p 242.

Article comparing the Church of England and  
Socialists. 'Socialists and the Church'.

Prompted a debate which was continued in the Leader  
issues throughout August, September and October.

131. See: Emrys Hughes, Keir Hardie, Allen and Unwin,  
London, 1956. Morgan, Keir Hardie; Laybourn, Philip  
Snowden; Thompson, The Enthusiasts; A Morgan, J Ramsay  
MacDonald, Manchester University Press, 1987; F M  
Leventhal, Arthur Henderson, Manchester University  
Press, 1989; Schneer, Ben Tillet.

Each of the above biographies mentions the key  
importance of religion in shaping the outlook of their  
subjects but none of the authors has explored this  
matter fully.

Leventhal's comments on Arthur Henderson, for example:

"religious convictions shaped his political  
outlook..." (p 20)

Henderson's religious pursuits as a Methodist

"were inseparable from his political activity..."  
(p 21)

but that is all we get.

132. Keir Hardie, quoted in Hughes, op cit, p 203.
133. Morgan, 'People and Power' in Smith, op cit, p 114.
134. Laurence Thompson, op cit, p 160.
135. See: Bob Holman, Good Old George: The Life of George Lansbury, Best-Loved Leader of the Labour Party, Lion, London, 1990, esp. pp 171-177.  
  
Lansbury (1859-1940).
136. Alan D Gilbert, The Making of Post-Christian Britain: A History of the Secularisation of Modern Society, Longman, London, 1980, p 3.
137. Pelling, The Origins..., p 142.
138. Fred Reid, 'Socialist Sunday Schools in Britain, 1892-1939', International Review of Social History, Volume II, 1966, pp 18-47.
139. Ibid, p 20.
140. Callum Brown, 'The Sunday School movement of Scotland, 1780-1914'. Records of the Scottish Church History Society, Volume 21, 1983, p 3.
141. Ibid.
142. Reid, op cit, p 44.
143. Ibid, p 45.
144. Donald C Smith, Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest: Social Criticism in the Scottish Church 1830-1945, Peter Lang, New York, 1987.
145. Ibid, p 382.
146. Ibid, Chapter 9, 'The First Indications of a Prophetic Awakening, 1880-1900', pp 245-325.
147. Ibid, Chapter 9 C, 'The Church, Socialism and the Labour movement', pp 290-312.
148. See, for example, A C Cheyne, The Transformation of the Kirk: Victorian Scotland's Religious Revolution,

St Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1983, Chapter V, 'The Social Revolution, pp 110-156.

which relied heavily on Smith's then unpublished thesis on passive obedience and prophetic protest.

Tom Gallacher, 'Scottish Protestantism and Politics: The Church Dimension in the Present Century', Graham Walker and Tom Gallacher, Sermons and Battle Hymns: Protestant Culture in Modern Scotland, Edinburgh University Press, 1990, p 95.

149. William Ferguson, 'Immutable Decrees - Iron Wages', review of Smith, op cit, in Expository Times, April, 1988.
150. J F C Harrison, Late Victorian Britain, 1875-1901, Fontana Press, London, 1990, p 98.
151. See, for example, Rev D MacColl, Among the Masses, or Work in the Wynds, Nelson, Edinburgh, 1867, pp 39-43, on the task of and virtues necessary for home missionaries working in the slums of Glasgow.
152. S J Brown, review of D C Smith, op cit, in Church History, Volume 57, 1988, pp 399-401.
153. Ibid, p 400.
154. Ibid, p 400.
155. Ibid, p 400.
156. Ibid, p 400.
157. J P Parry, Democracy and Religion: Gladstone and the Liberal Party, 1867-1875, Cambridge University Press, 1989, p 1.
158. D J Withrington, 'The Churches in Scotland c1870-1900: Towards a New Social Conscience?', Records of the Scottish Church History Society, Volume XIX, p 168.
159. Ian Levitt, Poverty and Welfare in Scotland, 1890-1948, Edinburgh University Press, 1988.
160. Cf, Kenneth O Morgan, Labour People: Leaders and Lieutenants, Hardie to Kinnock, Oxford University Press, 1987, p 1.
161. Graham Walker, 'Protestantism and Political Culture, 1890-1990', Graham Walker and Tom Gallacher, op cit, p 86.

For links between the ILP and Liberalism in Scotland see:

Howell, op cit, Chapter 7, 'Scotland', pp 133-173.

For the General Election record of the ILP in Scotland:

I G C Hutchison, A Political History of Scotland, 1832-1924: Parties, Elections and Issues, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1986, Chapter 6, 'The Liberal Party Under Strain, 1881-1900', pp 154-192 and Chapter 8, 'Edwardian Politics', pp 218-276.

Christopher Harvie, 'Before the Breakthrough, 1888-1922'

Ian Donnachie, Forward! Labour Politics in Scotland 1888-1988, Edinburgh University Press/Polygon, 1989, pp 7-29.

T C Smout, A Century of the Scottish People, 1830-1950, Collins, London, 1986, Chapter X, 'The Working Class Radical Tradition to 1885' pp 321-251 and Chapter XI, 'The Rise and Fall of Socialist Idealism', pp 252-276.

162. Walker, 'Protestantism and Political Culture', Walker and Gallacher, op cit, p 86.
163. Ibid, p 89.
164. William Knox, 'The Political and Workplace Culture', W Hamish Fraser and R J Morris, People and Society in Scotland, Volume II 1830-1914, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1990, p 155.
165. Ibid, p 155
166. Ibid, p 161.
167. Withrington, op cit, pp 155-156.
168. Ibid, p 164.
169. Ibid, pp 164-165.
170. Ibid, p 166.
171. Reports on the Schemes of the Church of Scotland for the Year 1887, Edinburgh, p 444.
172. Ibid, p 444.
173. Schemes, 1889, pp 389-400.



174. Schemes, 1890, pp 911-922.
175. The Commission, consisting of seventeen ministers and elders, comprehended all the Synods of the Church, except that of Glenelg, and conferred with seventy-three out of eighty-four presbyteries. It presented a sixth and final report to the General Assembly in May, 1896.
176. Schemes, 1891, pp 982.
177. Ibid, p 982.
178. Ibid, p 983.
179. Ibid, pp 984-996.
180. Ibid, p 989.
181. Ibid, pp 988-9.
182. Ibid, p 984.
183. Though, of course, people northwards tended to object to this idea and in Church matters members of rural presbyteries viewed things differently - as they still do.
184. Often writing under the pseudonym "Gavroche", Willie Stewart (1856-1947) was a key figure in the growth and development of the Scottish ILP. Yet almost nothing is known about him. He does not even have the distinction of being the subject of an entry in William Knox's Scottish Labour Leaders, 1918-1939: A Biographical Dictionary.

A native of Dunfermline and former linen factory worker, Stewart became a radical bookseller, stationer and newsagent, and first made his mark on the Scottish Socialist movement as a journalist. In the early 1880s he crossed from radical Liberalism to Socialism (as Keir Hardie had) and by the 1890s from his shop in Bruce Street, Dunfermline he organised the writing, editing and production of The Worker, a Socialist monthly for the Fife region. First issued in March 1898, and similar in tone, style and content to Hardie's Labour Leader, The Worker addressed its readers, declared Stewart,

"not in evening dress with deferential air and propitiating smile but with coats off and sleeves rolled up, as workers should."

[The Worker, Volume I, No 1, March 1898, p 7]

However, though the journal was written primarily "for workers, by workers", Stewart hoped that it would

receive support from many who were not commonly classed as workers because

"Socialism is not the movement of a class but of humanity, and its tendency is not to widen caste distinctions but to abolish them."

[The Worker, Volume I, No 1, March, 1898, p 7]

The Worker suffered from constant financial problems and the issue of February 1900 appears to have been the last. However, by this date Stewart had joined the staff of Labour Leader and was a frequent contributor to it and also to Robert Blatchford's Clarion (and, later, to Thomas Johnston's more specifically Scottish Socialist paper, Forward - see Chapter 11, ff 124.). Moreover, from 1900 until the early 1930s Stewart was to be one of the most able, articulate and respected of Scotland's ILP leaders. In 1912 he became Secretary of the Scottish Council of the ILP (which had been set up in 1906 as one of the Divisional Councils into which the British organisation was divided). Stewart served as secretary for the next twenty-five years during which time he displayed prodigious organisational talents and inspirational oratory. But, above all, it was his writings, nearly always under a pseudonym, that drew admiration in ILP circles. His articles in The Worker and then in Labour Leader and Forward, and his numerous pamphlets, whether on the life of Robert Burns, (to whom he was dedicated) or on the disastrous consequences of capitalism for humanity, were avidly read. Pugnacious, devastating in their critique of competition, selfish individualism and the profit motive, Stewart's writings also expressed his deep humanity. But he did not suffer fools gladly and his prose was of an extremely high literary merit which demanded of his readers more than a measure of intellectual breadth and sophistication. As a propagandist for Socialism Stewart was unmatched (even by Keir Hardie) yet throughout his long life was content to remain a plain russet-coated captain.

Stewart was devoted to Keir Hardie and to the message and spirit of the Ethical Socialism of the Socialist Revival that Hardie epitomised. He was at one with Hardie in the belief that Socialism was inevitable and tended towards that millennium in which

"'The common sense of most will hold a fretful realm in awe

And the peaceful earth shall slumber wrapt in universal law'"

'Thoughts from Keir Hardie on Socialism.'

[The Worker, Volume I, No 11, Jan 1899, p 135]

The goal of Socialism, argued Stewart, was liberty for body and soul. And the spirit of Socialism was not hatred or selfishness but brotherhood and love. By the power of love the oppressed and exploited workers of Scotland would, through Socialism and the ILP, win forward to the time when they would no longer be slaves and outcasts in their own country. Material poverty equalled mental slavery and set limits to political and spiritual freedom. Only Socialism could eliminate the evils of poverty, exploitation and ignorance, and create a remoralised social order.

Stewart mocked those who criticised Socialism not on the grounds of principle but on the grounds of practice. That, he argued, was the same thing as saying that justice can never be, and that truth is a lie. In fact, Socialism would bring about a better world, free from the ravages of capitalism.

"Through suffering and trouble it may yet have to come, the new and better life; but come it will for men have once again found a belief worth working for, and suffering for, and dying for - a belief which is neither radical nor sectarian, but universally human. The word for humanity is Socialism."

[W Stewart, ("Cosmopolitan"), 'Socialism', Products of Her Majesty's Sixty Years' Reign, Dunfermline, 1897]

As in Hardie's Labour Leader, so in Stewart's The Worker plenty of space was given over to discussion of the relationship between Socialism and Christianity. The hypocrisy of institutional religion was roundly condemned but such criticisms were more than balanced by articles and correspondences which argued that Socialism was Christianity in its purest form, and as Christ himself had preached. (If The Worker is anything to go by then Christian Socialism seems to have been particularly advanced among Fife's UP ministers).

Institutional religion, argued Stewart, had been commandeered by capitalism and was thus in part responsible for "polluting" the social atmosphere of the whole nation. And while the butt of Hardie's attack on Christian hypocrisy was Lord Overtoun, it was Dunfermline born Andrew Carnegie who drew Stewart's fire. Philanthropy, and especially that of people like Carnegie, was no real solution to social problems; first, because it tinkered at the edges when what was needed was structural change; second, because - and here Stewart's attitude echoed the voice of many Evangelical churchmen - philanthropy downgraded people and undermined their independence and dignity; third,

because there was a fundamental contradiction at the heart of philanthropy

"the 'elevation of the masses' - to use the cant phrase of the superior people - will not be brought about by philanthropy. Philanthropy may degrade; it cannot uplift... 'Carnegieism' in its later money-dispensing phase can never undo the evil of its earlier money-getting phase." ['Carnegieism' in James W Taylor edn., Selections from the Writings of William Stewart, Robert Gibson, Glasgow, 1948]

For Stewart, then, the fight for Socialism was a struggle between the forces of Light against those of Darkness; Socialism was Good, Capitalism, Evil. And, perhaps fittingly, one of Stewart's most famous works was his biography of Keir Hardie, an official ILP publication which first appeared in 1921 with an introduction by James Ramsay MacDonald. "Mr Stewart", wrote MacDonald, "writes of his hero frankly and unashamedly as a worshipper. He is a disciple..." [J R MacDonald, 'Introduction', in Stewart, J Keir Hardie: A Biography, ILP, 1921, p xvi]. And it was from Stewart's portrait that the enduring image of Hardie as an Old Testament prophet obedient to none but the voice God emerged. As Ramsay MacDonald put it, Hardie "will stand out forever as the Moses who led the Children of Labour in this country..." [J R MacDonald in Stewart, J Keir Hardie, p xxi].

The Worker: A Monthly Socialist Journal, 1898-1900.

W Stewart, Products of Her Majesty's Sixty Years' Reign (a pamphlet), Dunfermline, 1897.

James W Taylor, Selections from the Writings of William Stewart (Gavroche), Robert Gibson, Glasgow, 1948.

W Stewart, J Keir Hardie: A Biography, ILP, 1921.

OBIT, Glasgow Herald, 28 August 1947, p 6.

185. William Stewart ("Gavroche"), 'A Cardinal Question to Clergymen', Labour Leader, June 3, 1904, p 108.
186. Ibid, p 108.
187. Ibid, p 108.
188. Ibid, p 108.
189. Ibid, p 108.

190. William Stewart, 'A Derby Winner: The Betting Evil and Why It Flourishes', Labour Leader, June 10, 1904.
191. William Knox, 'The Political and Workplace Culture', Fraser and Morris, op cit, p 152.
192. Ibid, p 152.
193. Ibid, p 152.
194. Ibid, p 152.
195. Ibid, pp 152-153.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE RISE AND DECLINE OF WEAVING AIRDRIE, 1790-1840

#### Origins 1650-1790

Sometime between 1640 and 1650 the Barony of Monkland<sup>1</sup> in Lanarkshire which constituted one parish of the Church of Scotland was divided into two parishes; West or Old Monkland and East or New Monkland. Located wholly within the latter division, the Airdrie settlement around the mid-seventeenth century was little more than a ferm-toun<sup>2</sup> and a few scattered dwellings. A new church was built to serve the East Monkland parish - hence "New" Monkland - though for some time after the division of the original Monkland Barony the inhabitants of the East parish kept up their connections with the older West Monkland Kirk<sup>3</sup> that had formerly served the whole region.

The first sketch of a small but vibrant community which developed around the Airdrie ferm-toun in the course of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries is provided by the report on the New Monkland parish which appears in Sir John Sinclair's Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791-1799<sup>4</sup>.



Plotting the Course of Change: Airdrie and the Statistical Account of New Monkland Parish, 1793.

The Statistical Account of New Monkland parish by one William Mack, listed as writer at Edinburgh but in fact of Airdrie,<sup>5</sup> and baron baillie of the Barony of Airdrie, makes scant reference to Airdrie as such. But what it does relate is of some importance.

Mack's account of the parish suggests an almost idyllic rural lifestyle for the parish inhabitants; a life of quiet contentment amidst prosperity. There was, he reported, little disease or drunkenness, "except among a few of the lower rank,"<sup>6</sup> no prison or policing, plenty of employment and regular church attendance.<sup>7</sup>

The parish economy<sup>8</sup> was entering a period of transition but change was neither rapid nor cataclysmic. In the parish as a whole landowners, farmers and New Monkland kirk session were dominant. Traditional craft industries in the Airdrie settlement - brewing, distilling, tanning, weaving and a solitary iron-foundry - marked it apart from the surrounding area,<sup>9</sup> as did the presence of a small congregation of Burgher seceders and an Established Church chapel of ease.<sup>10</sup>

The lands of New Monkland were not remarkably fertile<sup>11</sup> when compared, for instance, with those of South Lanarkshire or

the eastern Lothians. In New Monkland oats and flax were the crops grown in greatest quantities, the latter as a cash-crop in heavy demand by the Glasgow linen industry.<sup>12</sup> The cultivation of flax indicates that local agriculture was neither static nor stagnant. Indeed, the "improvers"<sup>13</sup> had clearly made an impact on the thinking of New Monkland landowners. Much of the parish land had been enclosed with hedges and ditches,<sup>14</sup> and the best land given over to pasture for sheep, black cattle and horses.<sup>15</sup> High prices were fetched for cattle and dairy produce<sup>16</sup> in the early 1790s, especially on the Glasgow market.<sup>17</sup> This seems to have been an incentive to parish landowners to switch<sup>18</sup> from grains to the breeding and rearing of cattle, sheep, and draught horses the quality of which, in Mack's judgement, was equal to anything produced in other parts of Scotland.<sup>19</sup> Conversion to stock production not only improved pasture lands further because of natural manuring, it also increased land values.<sup>20</sup> The newly recommended principles of dairy management were well-understood and were being practised successfully,<sup>21</sup> as were experimentations with increasingly fashionable root crops such as turnips.<sup>22</sup>

Very little land in New Monkland was rented-out on the small-lease system,<sup>23</sup> most being farmed by the proprietors themselves.<sup>24</sup> Mack reckoned that if parish lands were rented-out they might yield anything between five and six thousand pounds sterling annually, not including the houses



in the Airdrie settlement which he estimated might give an additional thousand pounds per annum.<sup>25</sup>

There were about a hundred heritors in the parish, exclusive of the feuars of Airdrie, and of this hundred Mack listed nine as principal, only three of whom resided in the parish permanently and one occasionally.<sup>26</sup> Economically, socially and politically, through the ownership of land and through the parish Kirk of which the heritors were patrons, landowners exercised power and influence.<sup>27</sup> The principal landowners were not, for the most part, of ancient aristocratic lineage. The Aitchisons of Rochsolloch and Airdrie, for example, one of the most important local families, had succeeded to a fortune made by their forefathers from sugar plantations in Grenada.<sup>28</sup>

Within New Monkland, the largest concentration of people was located in and around Airdrie village, situated on a ridge between the North and South burns at the extreme southwest corner of the parish. (Map 1). The population of Airdrie in 1760 had been put at about "300 examinable persons".<sup>29</sup> Some thirty years later this figure had risen to 1100 and in 1792 hovered around 1762.<sup>30</sup> Mack calculated that if the Airdrie population total was added to that of the landward parish then the population of New Monkland as a whole

"cannot be less than 3560, which is more than it was forty years ago, the return of Dr Webster in 1755 being only 2713."<sup>31</sup>

In retrospect we know that this rise in New Monkland's population between 1755 and 1792 foreshadowed a trend that was to quicken and intensify in the course of the early nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> More important for the moment, the population of New Monkland as a whole in the 1790s was evenly distributed between Airdrie village and the surrounding countryside.

Apart from the natural increase of Airdrie inhabitants, it cannot be known precisely from what other sources the village population had been increased. The assumption can be made, however, that people had come in from the surrounding countryside to set up as handloom weavers, a point which will be discussed later. There was certainly some population movement within New Monkland even if, as Mack complained, it was confined to an over-abundance of vagrants and gypsies.<sup>33</sup>

It is clear that by the early 1790s Airdrie was a place apart in the parish not only in terms of its population but also because of its political status and widening economic base.

Status had been conferred upon the Airdrie settlement by an Act of Parliament of 1695, procured by Robert Hamilton

of the Airdrie estate, erecting the settlement into a market village with the right to hold four free fairs annually, a weekly market throughout the year and an additional weekly market during the harvest season for the hiring of shearers and other casual labour.<sup>34</sup>

For much of the eighteenth century Airdrie functioned as the most important local market for New Monkland parish. By the 1790s, however, Airdrie's stature as "mercato town" was diminishing as a result of the expansion of Glasgow,<sup>35</sup> some eleven miles distant to the west. Moreover, the character of the village was changing because of the rise of handloom weaving, a trade intimately connected with Glasgow.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, ease of access to Glasgow markets increased during the 1790s for it was in this decade that communications between Airdrie and the city were radically improved. Two important developments in this respect, both referred to by Mack,<sup>37</sup> were the opening of the Monkland "navigation" or canal in 1791, and the opening of a Glasgow to Edinburgh turnpike road in 1795.

Monkland canal, partly prospected by James Watt,<sup>38</sup> was constructed to bring coal from Monkland seams to Glasgow. Although the canal ran outwith New Monkland parish, plotting a course to the south of the boundary and passing through Old Monkland, it was to prove critical in the industrial development of New Monkland and Airdrie in the early nineteenth century. Until the advent of the

railways, the canal was the sole means of transport suitable for heavy goods traffic.<sup>39</sup>

The Glasgow-Edinburgh turnpike road ran to the south of a more ancient Glasgow-Edinburgh highway on either side of which Airdrie had originally grown up. In future years the town expanded into the area between the two roads, with the stretch of new turnpike becoming in time the main street of newer town developments.<sup>40</sup>

These advances in transport and communications were important signs of Airdrie's widening economic base and were to be of especial benefit to New Monkland heritors, and to those whose lands surrounded Airdrie, awakening to the prospect of good profits to be had from the exploitation and sale of coal and ironstone lying in their lands.

The quantity of local coal and the richness of seams had long been known.<sup>41</sup> Local coal found a pre-industrial outlet in the blacksmithing, distilling and brewing trades which flourished at Airdrie in the 1790s<sup>42</sup> - Mack recorded that the Airdrie distillery was reckoned to produce some 40,000 gallons of proof spirit annually, most of it "exported" to other parts of Scotland and some to America and the West Indies.<sup>43</sup> For the most part, however, the small industries located at Airdrie in late eighteenth century existed to serve the needs of agriculture or of brewing and

distilling, themselves traditional crafts intimately bound up with a rural way of life.

Nevertheless, by 1793 Airdrie could boast of one iron-foundry<sup>44</sup> and a substantial population of handloom weavers,<sup>45</sup> further indications of important changes taking place in the local economy.

The development of agriculture, the appearance of iron making and the expansion of weaving in Airdrie suggest that New Monkland parish in the 1790s was far from being backward or isolated from changes occurring throughout lowland Scotland. The gradual transformation of the parish economy was followed by more rapid growth of coal, iron and railway industries during the 1820s and '30s. New wealth accrued in the first instance to those on whose lands deposits of coal and ironstone were concentrated and technically easy to extract, or through whose property railways were built. Industrial revolution was to be of especial benefit to the smaller heritors or "bonnet-lairds" who, as we have seen from Mack's rental value for the parish, must have previously been of fairly limited means.<sup>46</sup> In other words, the nouveaux riches of New Monkland and Airdrie in the early nineteenth century were existing landowners, great and small,<sup>47</sup> who crossed with ease from agriculture to industry. Among the smaller landowners in particular there arose a spirit of pride in locality and a self confidence. However, in the 1790s the rise of Airdrie

as a weaving community gave birth to a new culture which ran counter to that of landowners in the parish generally. Thus, long before the transformations brought about by the expansion of heavy industry, a fissure had appeared in the parish. As a weaving and commercial centre, Airdrie became identifiable as a place apart from rural New Monkland parish and traditional landowner values. The rise and decline of weaving was an important phase in the transformation of Airdrie from market village to industrial town.

#### Looms and Learning: Airdrie as Weaving Community

In his Statistical Account of New Monkland Parish, William Mack made only passing reference to handloom weaving in Airdrie. His primary concern was improvement in New Monkland parish as a whole and not the rise of Airdrie specifically. He noted that distilling, brewing, malting, candle-making and iron founding were "manufactures of consequence" carried on at Airdrie but excluded weaving and tambouring from like category because "the weavers and tambourers are chiefly employed by Glasgow manufacturers".<sup>48</sup>

The cultivation of flax in New Monkland parish in the 1790s was indicative of the role which the linen industry played in the parish economy.<sup>49</sup> However, Mack's table of occupations for the parish in 1793 listed handloom weavers

as the largest single occupational group.<sup>50</sup> And we know from government sources that from 1786 dyed cotton yarns (pullicates) had supplanted flax as the almost exclusive raw material of Airdrie handloom weavers.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, Mack calculated that tambourers were the third largest occupational group in the parish<sup>52</sup> so there can be no doubt that by the 1790s cotton dominated all other textile work in the New Monkland parish economy.<sup>53</sup>

Second in numerical order in Mack's table of occupations, ranked between weavers and tambourers, were the farmers.<sup>54</sup> They remained scattered throughout the parish lands. By contrast, the weavers were almost entirely concentrated in Airdrie village. Moreover, within Airdrie by the 1830s weaving neighbourhoods could be identified

"where the proportion of the labour force who worked the shuttle was almost three times as high as the percentage for the town as a whole."<sup>55</sup>

Here, in the single-storeyed thatched cottages of which they were usually proprietors,<sup>56</sup> the weavers tended their looms, working with pullicates supplied by cotton yarn merchants in Glasgow via agents living locally.<sup>57</sup> In other words, the basic structure of Airdrie handloom weaving was almost entirely domestic. Weavers, men, women and children<sup>58</sup> worked from their own homes employed under the putting-out system and paid by the piece.<sup>59</sup> They existed principally from the irregular wages<sup>60</sup> provided by piecework



but as keen gardeners<sup>61</sup> they supplemented their income by growing potatoes<sup>62</sup> for use at their own table. Porridge and pease brose formed the staple diet<sup>63</sup> and many weaving families also kept a milch-cow to supply themselves with dairy products.<sup>64</sup> In times of prosperity meat and tea were readily consumed.<sup>65</sup>

During what has been called the "Golden Age" of handloom weaving in Scotland in the 1790s and early 1800s,<sup>66</sup> Airdrie weavers enjoyed their share of the high wages available in the cotton industry. One source suggests that at the time of the Napoleonic Wars five shillings per day was a common rate of pay.<sup>67</sup> And since the produce from gardens and milk-cow was consumed by weavers themselves, they could afford to spend surplus income on substantial furniture, decent clothes, books, newspapers and periodicals, friendly society dues, seat-rents in church.

Weavers throughout Scotland were articulate, well-educated and well-read people.<sup>68</sup> The irregularity of the work afforded opportunity for reading and discussion and, during the relatively prosperous Golden Age, high wages allowed the weavers to work less hours. Besides, the proficient weaver could glance at a magazine or paper propped on the loom. Education and prosperity gave weavers a powerful sense of independence, and this was reflected in their reputation for political radicalism<sup>69</sup> and religious sectarianism.<sup>70</sup> They were known for their ability to air



grievances - especially in times of economic depression - and for their grasp of the principles of political economy and the workings of the state legislature.<sup>71</sup> In addition, weavers' biblical and theological knowledge was reputed to be superior to that of any other group of artisans in the country.<sup>72</sup>

Like their fellows in other parts of Scotland, the Airdrie weavers had a reputation for sobriety and respectability.<sup>73</sup> They were also quite capable of articulating grievances and of suggesting remedies. They were closely involved with local radical activities in 1819-20 and were well-known for their devotion to religious dissent. Airdrie weavers were well-practised too in the benefits of mutual aid and organisation. Their prudence, thrift, concern for their fellows and organising skills were amply demonstrated by participation in friendly societies, in particular the Airdrie Weavers Friendly Society founded in late summer 1781.<sup>74</sup> Weavers were also instrumental in setting up Airdrie's four lodges of Gardeners between 1810 and 1823,<sup>75</sup> and were represented in the local masonic lodges, especially the Friendly Society of St John Operative Lodge (no. 203) formed in October 1788.<sup>76</sup> The formative role of weavers in these societies was a clear indication not only of the status and economic importance of weavers in the rise and development of Airdrie but also of their political, social and cultural significance.

An obvious sign of the key economic role of weaving in Airdrie from 1790-1840 was the number of handlooms being operated. In 1828 there were 1,700.<sup>77</sup> Ten years later this figure had dropped to 1,550.<sup>78</sup> Given that 1828 and 1838 came toward the middle and end respectively of the long post-Napoleonic War decline in Scottish handloom weaving, and that between 1821 and 1841 Airdrie's population had almost tripled from 4,860 to 12,418,<sup>79</sup> with an estimated population in 1838 of 9,867<sup>80</sup>, it is apparent that weaving occupied a significant proportion of Airdrie families until well into the 1830s. Indeed the 1,550 looms of 1838 were still operating in spite of the opening six years previously of Airdrie's first cotton-spinning and weaving factory, W H Houldsworth's.<sup>81</sup>

#### Radicalism and Retailing: The Decline of Handloom Weaving in Airdrie

From the end of the Napoleonic Wars handloom weaving went into a period of prolonged decline from which there was to be no long-term recovery.<sup>82</sup> The heavy concentration of cotton factories, and then of power looms, in and around Glasgow resulted in the increasing production of cheap cotton goods.<sup>83</sup> Handloom weavers of pullicates in particular were simply unable to compete with the factories. More seriously, the ease of entry to the weaving trade was exploited by soldiers returning from the

wars, by migrant highlanders and by the rising numbers of Irish immigrants.<sup>84</sup> Weaving was not a difficult craft to learn<sup>85</sup> and consequently by the later 1830s there was an excess of weavers far above the natural demand for their labours.<sup>86</sup> This benefited the employers who could enforce wage cuts requiring handloom weavers to work more hours, producing more cloth for less and less pay in an ever downward spiral.

The postwar decline of handloom weaving affected Airdrie weavers no less than those in other weaving districts of southern Scotland. Indeed, because they worked exclusively with pullicates, the Airdrie weavers by late 1830s were among the very worst off.<sup>87</sup> In 1838 the best work was paying about six shillings and sixpence a week, the worst only four shillings and sixpence.<sup>88</sup> More money could be earned by children working in Houldsworth's cotton factory.<sup>89</sup> Skilled weavers, however, were reluctant to go to Houldsworth's for this meant loss of status and, above all, loss of independence. Some weavers opted to leave the trade altogether for more lucrative employment - and appalling conditions - in the expanding coal and ironstone mining industries which in Airdrie and New Monkland parish as a whole were, by the middle 'thirties, overtaking weaving in economic importance.<sup>90</sup>

The impact of economic depression on the social, political and cultural life of weaving communities was enormous. The

1839 Reports of the Assistant Commissioners on Handloom Weaving in Scotland, stark and moving in their blandness, stand as a testimony to this.

Weaving agents generally appear to have suffered least. Many among this group had taken on groceries, draperies and other small businesses or had become fully fledged cloth-merchants, evidence of the wealth and power which could accrue to them in their work as agents.<sup>91</sup> Agents' economic diversification made them less dependent on the putting-out system than the handloom weavers who, by contrast, had nothing to fall back on. In Airdrie, while conditions for weavers steadily deteriorated after 1815, agents were shielded by their other business pursuits, especially their small shops.<sup>92</sup> The simple need for weavers to work meant that in some places agents not only held on to secure employment but also exercised a great deal of tyranny over weavers.<sup>93</sup> At Airdrie, however, weaving agents seem to have made every effort to work with weavers to prevent the decline of the trade and mitigate the social consequences of depression.<sup>94</sup>

The decline of the trade affected Airdrie weaving families in a number of ways. Crucially, the confidence and pride in self-help and mutual aid was seriously undermined. Organisation and fellowship built up over many years was placed under severe strain or even destroyed. For one thing, the carefully accumulated funds of the weavers

friendly societies were under constant pressure in the years after 1815, and the system of contributions and benefits became a source of acrimony. The Airdrie Weavers' Friendly Society actually threatened to expel members who fell behind with their annual four shillings dues during the 1819 slump in trade.<sup>95</sup> Later, in 1824, the entry fee was reduced but so were the alimENTS and funeral benefits.<sup>96</sup> By August 1826 the conditions of the Airdrie weavers were so bad that the Society decided to scrap the annual summer parade for that year:

"considering the aggregate of human misery which at present exists, and the gloomy, dark prospects of the ensuing winter from the accumulating woes of famine and disease [the meeting] are unanimously of the opinion that were the Weavers Society... at their ensuing election [of the new Preses and office bearers] to manifest anything like ostentation, parade and show, would at once be unwise, imprudent and insulting to Divine Providence."<sup>97</sup>

Just as the high hopes placed in the effectiveness of friendly societies were gradually eroded so too were those that had been invested in trades unionism. In Airdrie, as in other parts of Scotland, the mere existence of the Combination Acts (1799-1824) frustrated efforts at unionism<sup>98</sup> while the defeat of the great weavers' strike of 1812 - the first time Airdrie weavers had been involved in a major dispute<sup>99</sup> - crippled weavers' unionism for almost a decade.<sup>100</sup> As we will see in Chapter Six, however, the remorselessness of the decline of the trade prompted further attempts at trades unionism, especially during the

1820s and '30s,<sup>101</sup> and in Airdrie these efforts had important links with political radicalism.

It is important to recognise that the weavers were not the uncomprehending victims of market forces or industrialisation. They understood the nature and causes of their predicament, as Jellinger C Symons' Report on the Weavers of South Scotland makes clear. Since many of Symons' generalisations for the area under his inspection count for Airdrie specifically it is worth discussing them in brief.

Tension and acrimony among weavers caused by the weakening of friendly societies and the frustrations of trades unionism also took the form of an apparently ever-widening generation-gap.<sup>102</sup> Symons noted that the elder class of weavers felt a deep sense of injustice not so much over the scantiness of their present means as over the sharp contrast between past and present conditions.<sup>103</sup> High wages had gone for good but intelligence, education, civic and personal pride, and an independent spirit remained to embitter the older weavers' poverty. The younger generation, however, had grown more accustomed to living in poverty - though they were not content with it. Symons believed that the younger weavers drank more and were less educated and less respectable. He detected a decline of reading, of prudence and of church-going among the younger

weavers and placed the blame for all these changes on poverty.<sup>104</sup> The younger weavers were ill-educated because

"when a man's whole faculties are strained to the utmost from sunrise to sunset, to produce a miserable subsistence, he has neither leisure, aptitude nor desire for information..."<sup>105</sup>

Attendance at church - for young and old - became a source of embarrassment and humiliation because of lack of decent clothes, an inability to pay seat-rents and an unwillingness to accept pews assigned gratuitously for the poor.<sup>106</sup> Economic depression eroded the social life of weavers and undermined their whole world view to the point where even the family unit was threatened.

"The degenerating influence of excessive poverty and toil was never more strongly exemplified than in the case of the handloom weavers of Scotland. The present generation were born in a position replete with every circumstance, save one, which could favour the mental progress of an artisan. The high intelligence of their parents, their constant companionship with them, both at meal-times and working hours, the delicate and cleanly nature of their Art, the facilities it affords for information, and even for reading, during the operation of labour, added to the natural stimulus afforded to their pride by the high intellectual reputation of their body - all these afforded incentives and facilities for improvement, such as indisputably prove the power of the solitary counteracting curse [ie poverty] which has, notwithstanding, dragged them from the highest to among the lowest ranks in the civilisation of their class..."<sup>107</sup>

Nor were the divisive effects of poverty and degradation limited to a generation-gap among weavers. There was also increasing tension in weaving communities first, between



indigenous (Scots) weavers or weavers of long-standing, and Irish immigrants moving into the trade; second, between weavers and artisans or labourers in the developing coal and iron industries of west-central Scotland where many of the workers in these industries were Irish; and third, through radical politics, between weavers and an assertive bourgeoisie who wanted a share in control of local and national affairs.

The influx of labour into handloom weaving in the 1820s and '30s was nothing new. Indeed, the initial expansion and success of handloom weaving had been facilitated by the availability of lowland agricultural workers willing to take up the loom full-time, of highland migrants attracted south by higher wages and hopes for a better life, and of early Irish immigrant labour.<sup>108</sup> What was new in the post 1815 period was the scale and rapidity which the influx of labour assumed. The problem of overstocking outlasted even the dramatic expansion of heavy industries in the 1830s (it was not until the railway boom of the 1840s that a marked reduction in the weaving labour force occurred.)<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the continual depression of weavers wages was itself a cause of overstocking because of the difficulties which poverty threw on the transition of weavers to another trade or into cotton factories. Moving from weaving was often prevented by the existence of high union dues and restrictions on entry to other crafts<sup>110</sup> while older weavers did not want to go into factories and factories did not



necessarily want handloom weavers or even adults at all.<sup>111</sup> The problem of overstocking seems to have been less acute in semi-rural areas, such as Airdrie. Here, important routes of escape were made available to weavers in coal-mining, ironstone mining, engineering and railway construction and maintenance, especially in the years after 1840.<sup>112</sup> For Airdrie weavers then, there was at least some chance of being absorbed into the expanding local economy with its differentiated occupational patterns. In weaving communities generally, however, movement from weaving to some other trade was not easy and in addition, the importance of child labour in handloom weaving families yet further increased the superabundance of labour.<sup>113</sup>

Although only part of the general problem of overstocking, Irish immigrant workers moving into weaving bore the brunt of indigenous Scots weavers' resentment, and attracted official opprobrium. Symons claimed that Irish handloom weavers were generally in a much worse condition than Scots "but then again they [the Irish] are much more contented under privation."<sup>114</sup> In spite of their degraded state, he continued, the Irish immigrants were better-off as weavers in South Scotland than they would have been if they had stayed in Ireland. For the Irish, any change could be considered an improvement.<sup>115</sup> Symons condemned the Irish for two main reasons.

First, they were always willing to work for less wages than other weavers and so contributed to the ever deepening downward spiral in weavers' standard of living. The Irish pulled the Scots down with them.

"When a manufacturer desires to lower his wages it is ten to one but the Irish are first to accept them..."<sup>116</sup>

Second, the drinking habits and general demeanour of the Irish were wholly bad and a bad influence on Scots who mixed with them. In particular itinerant Irish weavers were

"the most dissolute and immoral class of weavers in Scotland... the most idle, noisy, profligate, drunken and quarrelsome set of people in weaving districts."<sup>117</sup>

While there can be no doubt that Irish immigrants had an adverse effect on weaving communities into which they were absorbed or were moving between, it is clear nevertheless that the fall in weavers' living standards was first and foremost the product of extreme poverty. Irish labour exacerbated the problem but did not cause it.

Antagonism between indigenous weavers and Irish immigrant workers could also be part of the conflict between weavers and better-paid artisans or labourers in other trades, especially the coal industry. During the colliers' strike in Lanarkshire in 1837 weavers at Airdrie accepted work in

local pits as strike-breaking labour and the military had to be called in to protect them.<sup>118</sup> Although such strike-breaking activities were isolated events

"they nevertheless confirmed the worst fears of other groups... who were now determined to protect their occupations against a vast army of poverty-stricken handloom weavers."<sup>119</sup>

Weavers could also harbour feelings of resentment towards the petite-bourgeoisie and bourgeois proper, particularly when these latter groups appeared to ignore the weavers' plight or oppose their participation in radical politics. In Airdrie, conflict between weavers and a rising bourgeoisie was the exception not the rule.<sup>120</sup> However, when it did occur it could be serious - as was the case in 1819-20.

The political awakening in Scotland provoked by the French Revolution of 1789 was particularly evident among professional middle classes and self-educated shopkeepers and skilled artisans.<sup>121</sup> However, the radicalism of the 1790s was reformist rather than revolutionary in character.<sup>122</sup> The participation of some Glasgow and Edinburgh lawyers in the Friends of the People Convention movements and the moderation which the leadership espoused was crucial in gaining the support of shopkeepers, artisans and weavers as members of the rank and file.<sup>123</sup> For weavers in particular, alliance with the petite-bourgeoisie and professional middle class radicals was natural. In places

like Airdrie weavers were pillars of society and strongly attached to self-help, sobriety and independence. They did not adopt these values from the middle class. On the contrary, these were shared values and weavers, along with other prosperous and educated artisans in the 1790s, were by their participation in radical agitations

"demanding a degree of political recognition commensurate with their social and economic standing."<sup>124</sup>

The failures of radicalism in the 1790s and then in the immediate post war years placed the alliance between middle class and artisan radicals under pressure. Among weavers unemployment, high prices, the overstocked labour market, falling wages and food scarcity all contributed to a sense of bitterness towards the existing social system.<sup>125</sup> Government repression heightened discontent and produced a polarisation of attitudes among Scottish radicals.<sup>126</sup> The supporters of moral suasion and reformism who had been the dominant influence during the 1790s were now coming up against a tide of opinion, not least among weavers, that physical force might be a more effective way of securing political and economic objectives.<sup>127</sup>

Weavers' involvement in radical politics came to a climax in 1819-20. The economic crisis of 1819, disgust at the Government's support for the actions of the Manchester yeomanry during the St Peter's Fields demonstration, and

the repressive legislation - the Six or "Gag" Acts - in the wake of events in Manchester form the background to a revived and more vigorous Scottish radicalism.<sup>128</sup> Not only were radicals now more vocal and strident than before, there was also a more clearly proletarian leadership among whom weavers were prominent.<sup>129</sup>

The polarisation of attitudes among radicals that had been developing since the immediate post war agitations was becoming more pronounced. Those who argued for armed insurrection if not in reality capable of pursuing such action to a successful conclusion certainly convinced local and national authorities that they might be.<sup>130</sup> And indeed, at the close of 1819 there were Reform Associations or "Unions" in Ayrshire, Renfrewshire, Stirlingshire, Dumbartonshire and Lanarkshire that had opted to abandon moral force in favour of violence - or at least violent rhetoric. These militants succeeded in organising a central committee in December attended by delegates from a number of places, including Airdrie.<sup>131</sup>

In the Spring of 1820, this revitalised Scottish radicalism collapsed. On Sunday 2 April a proclamation or declaration appeared on prominent buildings and other sites in many of the manufacturing towns and villages of west-central Scotland, including Airdrie.<sup>132</sup> Calling for a general cessation of labour throughout the country, it aroused some excitement among working people and fear among the civil

authorities and propertied classes.<sup>133</sup> However, the bulk of working people ignored the strike call and at the only two serious incidents which occurred, skirmishes involving radical weavers and yeomanry - one at Strathaven and the other in Stirlingshire - the weavers were easily crushed, some being arrested and given harsh sentences for sedition.<sup>134</sup>

There can be no doubt about the Airdrie weavers' key role in the local agitations during the "Radical War" of 1819-20. On this occasion, the focal point of Airdrie radicalism was the local branch of the Reform Union. A brief consideration of the Union leadership<sup>135</sup> confirms the central position of weavers. The President of the Union, one William Rodger, cartwright and mason, was aided by an able Secretary, William Miller. Miller, weaver, poet, author, speaker, agitator and, in later life, school-teacher, achieved a certain fame and notoriety locally as "Radical Wull". He was twice arrested and briefly imprisoned because of his outspokenness. Miller's political talents were matched by those of another radical weaver in the Union, John Craig. Other leading lights were William Weir, a radical stationer whose shop in the High Street was well-known as a repository of radical literature, Kelman Smith, John Blair, Robert Findlay and James Black, all weavers, the last mentioned being Preses of the Airdrie Weavers' Society.<sup>136</sup>

It is difficult to be precise about the content or depth of militancy of Airdrie radicalism in 1819-20. But there was certainly tension and the potential for trouble. James Begg, minister of New Monkland parish church, condemned radical antics and extremism. His son, James Begg junior, who was to become famous as an Evangelical leader of the post-Disruption Free Church of Scotland, recalled his father denouncing the Airdrie radicals from the pulpit as levellers and the scum of the earth attempting to become rulers of the nation by promoting violence and civil war.<sup>137</sup> Certainly the Airdrie Reform Union helped to co-ordinate a number of mass meetings of other Union contingents from surrounding districts. The most famous demonstrations at Airdrie were held on 6 October 1819 and 1 November 1819.<sup>138</sup> The second of these consisted of a procession through the town headed by the Airdrie Union band<sup>139</sup> and included a detachment of colliers from the nearby village of Greenend.<sup>140</sup> In any event, after a time, as James Begg junior recalled, the storm blew over. That there had indeed been something of a storm at Airdrie is clear from the reactions of the local authorities, and to some extent the local bourgeoisie, to radicalism. These were the formation of two volunteer companies and one troop of yeomanry cavalry, and the Burgh Movement which led to the incorporation of Airdrie in 1821.

In accordance with a government appeal to raise volunteer companies and troops of yeomanry to maintain law and order



during the 1819 crisis, two companies of volunteers and one troop of yeomanry were raised at Airdrie amounting in total to somewhere between 150 and 240 men.<sup>141</sup> Both volunteers and yeomanry were an addition to detachments of regular troops stationed in the town<sup>142</sup> - a clear indication that neither local nor national authorities were prepared to take any chances in Airdrie and that the town was of strategic importance in terms of the county. More importantly, the social backgrounds of those who officered the volunteer companies is highly revealing.<sup>143</sup>

The first company was captained by George M Nisbet of Cairnhill, the second most important local landlord after the Misses Aitchison of the Airdrie-Rochsolloch estates (he later became provost of Airdrie Burgh).<sup>144</sup> Among the lieutenants, sergeants, corporals and fuglemen there were two merchants, one each of weaving agent, coalmaster, wright, land-surveyor and watchmaker, and two shoemakers.

The second company was captained by John Mack, writer and son of William Mack, author of the 'Statistical Account of New Monkland, 1793'. The lieutenants, sergeants, bugler, pay-master and sergeant-major of this company comprised a distiller, a wright, a surgeon, a merchant, a labourer, a cloth merchant, two shoemakers, two weaving agents, one postmaster and one weaver.

If the social background of those who officered the volunteer companies is anything to go by, then the Airdrie radicalism of 1819-20 not only divided weavers from weavers, it also divided weavers from landowners, merchants, shopkeepers and other skilled artisans. The alliance between radical weavers, artisans and middle class which had been characteristic of Scottish radicalism in the 1790s could not be taken for granted in Airdrie radicalism of the 1819-20 period. However, it would be wrong to exaggerate the divisions between radical weavers and petit-bourgeois and bourgeois interests at Airdrie. The twice imprisoned William Miller, for instance, had been released on surety provided by Dr William Clark of Wester Moffat, laird of an estate to the east of Airdrie and in later years a staunch supporter of the Free Church.<sup>145</sup> Although during the "Radical War" the Airdrie weavers were opposed by bourgeois and petit bourgeoisie they nevertheless elicited a great deal of sympathy, and alliance between weaver, artisan and middle class radicals was resumed, stronger than ever, during the 1830s. In the meantime, the volunteer companies were as much an instrument for the assertion and protection of commercial and business interests as a force for combating insurrectionary weavers. The companies were an expression of fear of the breakdown of law and order.

It was the demand for law and order, and for a stable environment for trade and commerce, which lay at the root

of the Burgh Movement. This too was championed by merchants and shopkeepers in alliance with local landowners. J T Rankin, an ex-provost of Airdrie, writing in 1855, was in no doubt that

"this town having been... greatly disturbed and business injured by the exciting events previous to 1821, it was considered proper to have it erected into a burgh and put under a regular police and municipal constitution."<sup>146</sup>

Under the supervision of Sir William Alexander, nephew and heir of the Misses Aitchison of Airdrie estate, an Act of parliament was obtained.<sup>147</sup> By the terms of this Act, Airdrie was erected into a free and independent burgh of barony on May 28, 1821.<sup>148</sup> The rights of the superior landlords - the proprietors of the Airdrie-Rochsolloch estate - were safeguarded<sup>149</sup> but the superior had no direct authority over the new burgh of Airdrie. From now on, Airdrie residents or landowners who had contributed two guineas towards the costs of obtaining the burgh act had the right to elect a burgh council consisting of a provost, three bailies, twelve councillors and a treasurer. (Later, burgess status, and hence the right to vote, was extended to include anyone who paid a three guinea fee per annum.)<sup>150</sup> The burgh act also provided for the office of a town clerk, a post which in the early days of the burgh remained at the disposal of the landlords superior. Clearly, this gave the superior a degree of power and influence, for the clerkship was an important office in the day to day running of

municipal government.<sup>151</sup> However, it is equally clear that local landlords were neither the key group behind the burgh movement nor the most important power in Airdrie's new town council.<sup>152</sup> A glance at the social composition of the first council<sup>153</sup> reveals the extent to which real power and influence in Airdrie by the 1820s lay in the hands of the petit bourgeoisie and professional middle classes.

William Mack, now aged eighty-one, became Airdrie's first provost and his son, John, also a lawyer (and captain of the second company of volunteers) was appointed town clerk. Other office bearers and councillors included six merchants, one merchant/weaving agent, two wrights, one currier, one flesher, one portioner, one vintner, one assessor of taxes and one surgeon. Indeed, from 1821 onwards merchants, lawyers, businessmen, shopkeepers and skilled artisans were to dominate town councils. Old landowner power was progressively weakened, while coalmasters, ironstone merchants, ironmasters and manufacturers, and spirit merchants were to appear ever more frequently in council robes. Furthermore, as many businesses and professions in Airdrie were family based, succession falling from father to sons, the grip of the town's ruling elite became tighter even as municipal government became more democratic in the course of the nineteenth century. Of the 199 men who had been town councillors by the time of the burgh centenary there was an almost complete absence of unskilled labourers - who

even in the early twentieth century had neither time nor money to take part in council affairs.<sup>154</sup>

A conscious alliance of professional middle class and petit bourgeois interests with local landowners produced the burgh movement and the act of 1821. Among the former grouping, merchants, shopkeepers, artisans and emerging industrial entrepreneurs asserted their dominance over municipal affairs. Retailers had no intention of allowing radical weavers to obstruct good business, however much they sympathised with the weavers' cause.

#### A Sense of Place. Airdrie c1790-1840

T C Smout has argued that the iron industry of Lanarkshire doubled the populations of Old and New Monkland parishes between 1831 and 1841, and "created" Airdrie.<sup>155</sup> However, this ignores the reality that already by 1821 Airdrie had a distinctive political, economic and cultural identity of its own that set it apart from the rest of New Monkland parish. Indeed, Airdrie had several identities and the dialectical interplay between these allows us to refer to it as a community in its own right.

First and foremost, Airdrie was a weaving community. The concentration of weavers during the 1790s and early 1800s is crucial to any understanding of the culture and civic

traditions of the late nineteenth century town and of the impact of industrial revolution.

Although until the opening of W H Houldsworth's cotton spinning and weaving factory in 1832 there were no real weaving factories in Airdrie, the large number of looms and high proportion of the populace involved directly or indirectly - through retail and supply - in the weaving trade justifies the label "proto-industrial" as a description of the town by the 1820s. The years after 1790 were a transitional period of critical importance in the future development of Airdrie as a town dominated by coal, iron and engineering.

New Monkland parish, and Airdrie within it, experienced all the important changes mentioned by Smout as being of significance in the wider transformation which came to be called the industrial revolution: agricultural improvement, displacement of linen by cotton, the rise of handloom weaving, transport and communications development, the appearance of the coal and iron industries.<sup>156</sup> In Airdrie, it was during the decades after the 1780s that the economic structures and those of civil government, political, social, cultural and religious life of the future were laid down. And what bound the years between 1790 and 1820 together was the weaving tradition. Since Airdrie's existence as a weaving community overlapped with its future development as an industrial town, the weaving identity and

traditions provided important elements of ideological continuity. Though the New World of coal and iron superseded the Old World of weaving Airdrie, it did not obliterate it.

Independency, pride in work, education and articulacy, religious and political radicalism, respectability and, above all, a keen sense of community and of belonging to a particular place - these were the hallmarks of weavers at Airdrie. Nor is this to romanticise as later generations of Airdrieonians were prone to do. After 1815, when handloom weaving went into decline, the Airdrie weavers suffered acutely. Proletarianisation produced cracks in once solid communal life-structures and work was carried out on or near the brink of starvation. "Go into the cottages of the handloom weavers of Girvan, Maybole or Airdrie", said Jellinger C Symons,

"and few will be found in which some necessary article of comfort is not wanting; whilst laborious exertion alone preserves the balance between scanty food and absolute starvation."<sup>157</sup>

Nor was this situation helped by the fact that weavers of cotton districts like Airdrie were usually

"not within the cognizance, and never under the immediate care of the resident gentry;... rarely do the language of sympathy, or the kindly influence of charity gladden their damp and dreary dwellings."<sup>158</sup>



Symons had no doubts: "I am confident in the belief that no other class (as a class) are so badly-off as the handloom weavers"<sup>159</sup>

But it was precisely because weavers had not always been poor and lacking in status that their predicament was so acute.

In spite of the dependence of Airdrie weavers on the Glasgow cotton industry - a dependence for which they paid dearly when the structure of the industry in that city changed - it would be a great mistake to imagine that Airdrie was merely a satellite of Glasgow. Airdrie weavers' powerful bond with and sense of locality was expressed in a number of ways. At the heart of communal life in the town were the weaving neighbourhoods. These provided a world - when desired or necessary, an enclosed world - where weavers shared life experiences: work, leisure, learning, politics and religion. The sense of belonging was further entrenched, especially during the years of prosperity, by the domestic system, proprietorship of cottages and keeping one's own garden. Identity with the larger community was expressed through participation in friendly societies, freemasonry, churches, schools, gardeners' orders, reform union, shops and shopping. This did not mean that weavers were, in the pejorative sense of the term, parochial. They were not narrow or isolated from national events and happenings. Certainly, the 1839 Reports

of the Assistant Commissioners recognised that the distinctiveness of weaving communities could be a problem because it discouraged Scottish weaving families from going to find employment in more prosperous trades in places other than their home area. But equally, the Reports emphasised that weavers were quite capable of proposing national solutions to their problems, to be applied by government instigated reform or legislation.

The rise of Airdrie as a weaving community was important for another reason. It signalled the beginning of the end of the older community identity which had centred on New Monkland parish and kirk. There can be no doubt that at the end of the eighteenth century and on into the 1830s and '40s New Monkland parish heritors and kirk session were still powers to be reckoned with. But it is also clear that during the same period there arose in Airdrie a new community and culture running at variance with the old, pre-industrial concept of New Monkland parish. Certainly, local landowners, especially the proprietors of the Airdrie Rochsolloch estate and of Cairnhill, retained positions of power and influence, partly because of their transformation into landowning industrialists. Even before this change in landowners economic role, however, the rise of weaving, and of merchant and shopkeeper power in Airdrie gave birth to a civic culture which ran against rural landowning values. From the weavers point of view landward or absentee landlords were of little use during the depression years.

In this respect old social deference was undermined early on in the nineteenth century. So much so, that by the time coal, iron and engineering surpassed weaving in importance, there already existed in Airdrie a sense of independency that was different from identity with New Monkland parish.

However, although the participation of Airdrie weavers in the radicalism of 1819-20 did not endear them to New Monkland heritors and parish kirk minister, it was not greeted with enthusiasm by the town's rising bourgeoisie either. The preponderance of weavers in Airdrie radicalism is hardly surprising given that so many of the town's inhabitants lived off the loom. But their role should not be exaggerated. Airdrie Weavers' Society, for instance, was generally loyalist and rather conservative and does not appear to have given any official support to the radicals cause, in spite of the participation of some of its office-bearers. Moreover, the militancy of weaver radicals and their partial alienation from local business and commercial interests was in some respects a departure from local tradition for by the 1830s radical weavers and their trade union had once again become part of a broad alliance of middle and working class politics.

Airdrie weavers participation in the events of the "Radical War" of 1819-20 was part of a wider movement among weavers nationally to win political and economic rights and so hold back their enforced proletarianism. Radical politics were

also a bid to re-assert the old sense of stability, now so clearly under strain, and to counter the rising influence of merchants, businessmen and shopkeepers who were becoming less dependent on the survival of weaving as Airdrie became industrialised. Collective traditions and shared values of self-help, thrift, and independence were not necessarily being jettisoned by the town's aspiring bourgeoisie in favour of a more aggressive, competitive environment. Rather, weavers, because of their worsening standard of living and loss of status, were becoming unable to compete as dignified craftsmen and were being excluded by their poverty from expressing those very values which they had formerly held so dear.

Nevertheless, the involvement of Airdrie weavers in the radical activities of 1819-20 and later was of key importance in the later nineteenth century when civic leaders and ordinary people sought to define or describe the "character" of their town. From 1790 to 1830 a whole generation of Airdrieonians had been born and bred among weavers and weaving culture, even if not all were weavers themselves. The most important legacy of the Airdrie weavers was the tradition that grew around them and their passing. They bequeathed to future inhabitants of the town not only a wealth of experiences, expertise and a fierce local patriotism, but also - and crucially - a mythology; a body of popular lore in which the world-view and moral outlook of weavers became embodied as an ideal. And

depending on how one chose to interpret the weaving mythology, it contained God, heroes and an epic struggle for survival against all odds. It was dramatic, local and based on a significant element of truth. As mythology, the Airdrie weavers' tradition was built-on, assimilated, used and re-used by men and women of different social classes in later nineteenth century Airdrie.

The weaving mythology was a powerful element of ideological continuity which shaped responses and reactions to, and served as a point of orientation in the midst of change. It was crucial in maintaining Airdrie's sense of community and distinctiveness in the 1830s and '40s when the population was swollen by incomers seeking work in coal and ironstone mines or on the railways. Weavers' independency struck a chord with colliers while the self-made middle-classes admired the weavers' reputation for sobriety and education. Indeed, middle class civic leaders in particular felt justified in using the example of the weavers to lecture less respectable elements among the town's working classes against the evils of drink and non-churchgoing because the middle classes themselves had "drawn lessons" from weaving mythology.

The Airdrie weavers' tradition was not just a localised example of what E J Hobsbawm has described as the "invention of tradition".<sup>160</sup> Though undoubtedly cast in idealised form and in terms of nostalgia for a lost world,

the weaving mythology was important and enduring precisely because it was a genuine expression of Airdrie's sense of community and distinctiveness, and of real links with the past. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth century the weaving mythology was kept alive by the continuing existence of the Airdrie Weavers' Society (1781), even when there were no more handloom weavers in the town.

A huge procession of all the Airdrie friendly societies, gardeners lodges and operative masons took place on 31 August 1830 to celebrate the Weavers' Society jubilee. Recording this great occasion for posterity the Society minutes concluded

"Such were the breathings of our fathers. May we inhale their spirit, imitate their example, and study in the new era of the Society's history to tell our children of the proceedings of this unprecedented day."<sup>161</sup>

Moreover, until 1873 the Weavers' Society would not admit any one who was not, or had not been a working weaver. In that year, however, since the handloom trade had all but disappeared it was decided to broaden the base of the Society by admitting

"members of all professions (underground workers excepted - ie miners) between 16 and 45 years of age, free from all bodily infirmities, of a good moral character and of the Protestant faith."<sup>162</sup>

The exclusion of miners and Catholics was indicative of the old world character of the Society as well as of the suspicion with which miners were still treated, even although by the 1870s they constituted the bulk of Airdrie's working classes. Equally important, the new terms of entry to the Society permitted middle class professionals to become "honorary weavers" and so adopt the weaving tradition as their own. However, there was never any doubt about the working class or artisan roots of the Society. The second jubilee celebrated on 24 September 1881 provided the opportunity for a classic expression of late Victorian civic pride. Airdrie Advertiser reported that

"From the moment that it became known that the weavers intended to celebrate the centenary of the inauguration of their order in Airdrie with full honours, all the trades and public bodies in the town... most heartily expressed their desire to join in... the proceedings assumed the nature of a great trade demonstration to commemorate the completion of the hundredth year of a grand charitable and mutual assurance association founded by, and for the special behoof of the working classes."<sup>163</sup>

The jubilee procession served as a reaffirmation of community, and during it normal everyday conflicts and jealousies were placed on one side

"capitalist and labourer were to be found marching together; the provost, magistrates and members of the town council, with many employers of labour and leading merchants... joined in the demonstration... 875 persons took part... accompanied by thirteen bands of music and nine lorries carrying looms and other representations or models of various trades."<sup>164</sup>



At the Public Hall where the procession terminated speeches and presentations were made, and the grandson of Zechariah Anderson, first deacon of the Weavers' Society in 1781, made a special appearance.<sup>165</sup> Indeed, one of the old looms borne in the procession was the original warp beam of Zechariah Anderson.<sup>166</sup> The presence of merchants and tradesmen at the second jubilee celebrations was indicative not only of the historic links between Airdrie's commercial identity and weaving but also of the key role of commerce and trade in community and culture at Airdrie.

Since the 1790s Airdrie merchants, shopkeepers and non-weaver artisans had been able to enhance their economic and political power and social status riding on the back of handloom weavers, whose need for supplies and purchasing power during the "Golden Age" had been greater than that of other workers. The development of weaving Airdrie before the industrial revolution allowed the retailing and craft side of the local economy to expand. Merchants and shopkeepers - many of whom were skilled artisans such as carpenters or shoemakers - were in a "no lose" situation. For, rising in tandem with weaving, they had not only built-up a solid base prior to 1820 but were thereafter among the chief beneficiaries of accelerating industrial change and population expansion. No longer dependent on weaving, merchants and shopkeepers cashed-in on industrialisation; so much so that in later decades the

more prosperous and respectable from among their numbers joined landowner-industrialists, lawyers, doctors and ministers as members of the bourgeoisie proper. The contribution of the merchants, small businessmen and shopkeepers in the creation of Airdrie was enormous. It would be churlish to deny that in pushing for the incorporation of the town merchants and shopkeepers believed they had the best interests of all Airdrie at heart. Equally, it would be wrong to argue that incorporation was not more beneficial to them than to, for instance, weavers. But commercial self-interest did not mean that a sense of belonging to Airdrie was less sincere or diluted than among weavers. On the contrary, because Airdrie was a small place, even by mid-nineteenth century standards, commerce and especially retailing depended on a sense of place.

Shops, including spirit shops and public houses, were important focal points of community life. They formed a network of exchanges both at neighbourhood level and over the whole town distributing not only the goods they sold but also ideas, opinions and information. Like weaving, shops were family businesses and this lent an air of informality and community to the town because it helped to convey the impression that Airdrie was an independent and self-sufficient unit. For shopkeepers and merchants, incorporation undoubtedly benefited trade because it brought at least some semblance of law and order for the

protection of property. Nevertheless, Airdrie merchants, shopkeepers and artisans were bound-in with traditions of self-help, independency, thrift and local patriotism which had appealed to, and were the legacy of the weavers. In this respect, the gap between radical weavers and petit-bourgeoisie during 1819-20 was much less wide than appearances suggested. More importantly, Airdrie merchants and shopkeepers anticipated the shape of things to come for while weavers felt population expansion and industrial change as threats and an intrusion, commercial and tradespeople saw it as an opportunity. The purchasing powers of weavers had diminished considerably by the 1830s but that of incoming colliers, ironstone miners and then railway workers was immense (by virtue of numbers rather than of high wages). Moreover, the pressure from merchants and shopkeepers for incorporation showed foresight because the problems of law and order did not disappear with the demise of weavers' militant radicalism in 1820 but rather increased as new workers flooded into the town and its public houses.

Like the weaving tradition, Airdrie's commercial tradition bridged the gap between Old and New World town. Precisely because the roots of their success lay in weaving, commerce and trade contributed to the town's distinctiveness and provided further ideological continuity. The continued, thriving activity of merchants and retailers, in spite of the decline of handloom weaving, ensured that between 1790

and 1830 Airdrie had a robust economic framework which benefited from industrialisation and at the same time cushioned the more destructive effects of rapid or unpredictable change during the industrial revolution.

### Notes

1. The lands of the Barony of Monkland had originally belonged to the Cistercian Monks of Newbattle Abbey in Midlothian. For this and other antiquarian details of "the Monklands" pre-1650:

John MacArthur, New Monkland Parish: Its History, Industries and People, C L Wright, Glasgow, 1890, pp 3-34.

James Knox, Airdrie: A Historical Sketch, Baird and Hamilton, Airdrie, 1921, pp 1-7.

George Thomson, 'Airdrie and the Parish of New Monkland', The Third Statistical Account of Scotland, Volume VIII, The County of Lanark, Collins, Glasgow, 1960, p 154, 159.

There is some confusion as to the precise date of the division of the barony. Details of this controversy:

MacArthur, op cit, pp 34-5.

2. That is the ferm-toun of Airdrie Estate. The division of New Monkland by estates, their respective histories, proprietors and relationship with Airdrie town is immensely complicated. MacArthur, with Victorian obsession for detail, has managed to bring some order to the story.

In brief, the two most important local estates from the Airdrie point of view were the Rochsolloch estate and the Airdrie estate proper. From the Reformation until the later eighteenth century these estates were separate. As a consequence of intermarriage between the two landowning families the estates became conjoined as Airdrie-Rochsolloch. On these lands, Airdrie town developed.

Map 2 gives a rough guide of the extent of the Airdrie-Rochsolloch estate.

3. Knox, op cit, pp 7-8.
4. For a general introduction to the aims, methods and value of the "Old" Statistical Account (OSA):

Donald J Withrington and Ian R Grant, 'General Introduction', The Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791-1799, edited by Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, Reprint Edition, Volume I, E.P. Publishing Ltd, Wakefield, 1973, pp ix-xlii.

5. William Mack, 'Parish of New or East Monkland, 1793', The Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791-1799, Grant

and Withrington, reprint edition, Volume VII, Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire, pp 522-552.

Statistical Accounts were usually written by the minister of each of the parishes surveyed (though the information was not necessarily gathered by him personally). In the case of the Account of New Monkland, William Mack of Airdrie, session clerk at New Monkland, wrote the report because the then minister was in such a bad state of health that he was unfit to perform the task.

(Mack, op cit, p 517).

6. Mack, op cit, p 522.

7. Ibid, pp 522-523.

8. For changes in the national economy of eighteenth century Scotland:

T C Smout, A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830, Collins/Fontana, Glasgow, Sixth Impression, 1981, Part Two: 'The Age of Transformation, 1690-1830'.

T M Devine and Rosalind Mitchison, People and Society in Scotland, Volume I 1760-1830, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1988.

9. Mack, op cit, p 522.

10. Ibid, p 517

11. Ibid, pp 513-514, 523.

12. Ibid, p 514.

Other annuals included wheat, barley, peas, beans, clover and rye-grass. The last two according to Mack, only recently introduced.

13. For general introduction to the thoughts, purpose and methods of the improvers:

T C Smout, op cit, Chapter X, 3, 'The Improvers', pp 271-281.

14. Mack, op cit, p 514.

15. Mack, op cit, p 514.

16. Mack, op cit, p 515.

17. Mack, op cit, p 516.

18. Mack, op cit, p 515.
19. Mack, op cit, p 515.
20. Mack, op cit, p 514.
21. Mack, op cit, p 515.
22. Mack, op cit, p 515.
23. For the intricacies of land-leasing arrangements in Scotland:  
  
Smout, op cit.
24. Not literally; usually via a factor or manager.  
  
Mack, op cit, p 516.
25. Ibid, p 516.
26. The principal heritors were:  
  
The Aitchison sisters, Isobel, Bertha and Margaret of Airdrie-Rochsolloch.  
Andrew Stirling of Drumpelzier.  
John Henry Cochrane of Rochsoles.  
James Dunlop of Garnkirk.  
William Hamilton of Wishaw.  
John Nisbet of Cairnhill.  
  
Permanently residing: Misses Aitchison.  
Occasionally residing: Cochrane of Rochsoles.
27. The structure of the balance of powers at local level has been described by Laurance J Saunders as follows:  
  
"In the parish, the heritors... conducted affairs in conjunction with the local ecclesiastical authority, i.e. the Minister and Kirk Session. The division of power between them and the scope of their cooperation were the result of the long historical relationship of Church and State, and in fact, these two institutions still interpenetrated and balanced each other. The heritors were relatively few in number (which made for convenience and despatch of business) and their local standing gave them weight in ecclesiastical as well as secular affairs. The appointment of the Minister was not their concern but the patronage of the living might be the property of one of their number. The eldership which constituted the lay element in the kirk session was a spiritual office but a rural minister naturally had to select some of the local proprietors or their factors or tenants as



persons of good repute, judgement and charity, and as few of the actual functions of the heritors were definitely secular, their presence as elders in the kirk session was an obvious convenience. They were responsible for the upkeep of the fabric of the church and manse, school and schoolhouse.. They appointed the schoolmaster... and guaranteed him a legal salary, paid by themselves and their tenants. They shared the obligation of poor relief with the minister and kirk-session; if voluntary contributions were insufficient, a poor rate might fall on the heritors and their tenants, and those who were elders were active in the proper distribution of assistance. In effect, the distinction between heritors and the kirk session was legal rather than actual, and behind the complicated balance of powers a practical use and want secured effective cooperation between the minister and local proprietors."

Laurance J Saunders, Scottish Democracy 1815-1840: The Social and Intellectual Background, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1950, p 18.

For the supreme importance of land and landownership;

Laurance J Saunders, op cit, especially Part I:2, 'Land and Land Monopoly', pp 14-35.

28. MacArthur, op cit, pp 208-211.

Other family histories of Airdrie and New Monkland landholders also in MacArthur, pp 183-211.

29. Mack, op cit, p 520.

30. Ibid, p 520.

31. Ibid, p 520.

32. National population trends and changes (1780-1830):

Smout, op cit, esp. Chapter XI, 'The Population Problem', pp 240-260.

33. Mack, op cit, p 518.

Mack complained that the problem of vagrants and gypsies was exacerbated by the lack of workhouse, jail and magistrates and suggested that;

"a set of respectable constables who understood and could properly exercise the ample powers committed to them, might be of great use in clearing the country of such vagrants, but as

this office is generally filled by the most ignorant and worthless, they are becoming a nuisance instead of a benefit."

34. Ibid, p 520.

also; James Thomson Rankin as contained in MacArthur, op cit, pp 212-213.

J T Rankin was a provost of Airdrie burgh in 1848. According to MacArthur (p 212) Rankin prepared two lectures on the early history of Airdrie which he delivered to the Airdrie Mechanics Institute about the beginning of 1855.

MacArthur incorporated large sections of these lectures directly into his own account of New Monkland Parish, (pp 212-217, 280).

The text of the 1695 Act is given in:

Knox, op cit, p 17.

35. For the expansion and increasing importance of Glasgow during the eighteenth century:

Smout, op cit, chapter XV,3 'Glasgow and the Business Classes' pp 355-365

36. Norman Murray, The Scottish Hand Loom Weavers, 1790-1850; A Social History, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1978.

'Introduction.' pp 1-12.

37. Mack, op cit, pp 518-519.

38. Ibid, p 518.

Further details on the early history of the canal:

Knox, op cit, p 50

Thomson, op cit, pp 156 & 165.

39. Thomson, op cit, pp 156 & 165.

40. The older road, apparently known as the "King's Highway", came to be known as Airdrie's High and Aitchison Streets. This continuous road formed the main thoroughfare of Airdrie "Old Town", relative to the "New Town" which developed on either side of the 1795 turnpike road and beyond.

Mack, op cit, pp 519-520

Knox, op cit, pp 22-24, 50.

Thomson, op cit, pp 160, 164.

41. The monks of Newbattle are reputed to have been "the earliest coalworkers..." Knox, op cit, pp 74-75.

Certainly from the 1770's the quality of Old and New Monkland coal was well-known. Mack noticed that by the 1790's the local coal industry was poised for a great expansion following the opening of the Monkland Canal.

"Twenty years ago, coal sold so low as sixpence the cartload; but since the Monkland navigation was opened, it sells at eighteen pence the cart weighing twelve hundredweight."

Mack, op cit, pp 518-519.

42. Mack, op cit, p 522.

43. Ibid, p 522.

44. Ibid, p 522.

45. Ibid, p 521.

46. This point was made by Rev James Begg of Newington whose father, James, was minister at New Monkland kirk from 1801-1845. In the autobiographical section of Thomas Smith's, Biography of Begg of Newington, James junior recalled that before the wealth produced by coal and iron,

"although not very rich, some of the small lairds were remarkably litigious...."

Thomas Smith DD, Memoirs of James Begg of Newington Free Church, Edinburgh, James Gemmel, Edinburgh, 1885, p 13.

47. Not all the good and the great of New Monkland were enthusiastic supporters of industrialisation. The Misses Aitchison of Airdrie-Rochsolloch estates refused to allow exploitation of a most valuable coal and iron field. Their nephew and heir, Sir William Alexander was less cautious (see Chapters 5 and 6 following).

John MacArthur, op cit, p 190.

48. Mack, op cit, p 522.

49. "At this period the Monklands were famed for producing flax and flax seed. For the purpose of encouraging growers of flax, the Board of Manufacturers in

Scotland offered annual premiums, and it is noteworthy that in 1793 our local farmers gained in premiums more than all the parishes in Lanarkshire put together, and only some £40 short of the total amount allocated to the whole of Scotland...."

Knox, op cit, p 51.

50. Mack calculated that there were 227 weavers in 1793. Mack, op cit, p 521.

51. Assistant Commissioners' Reports were drawn up in an attempt to assess the true condition of handloom weavers during the depression of the 1830s. Parliament, following the advice of two Select Committees on handloom weaving (1834; 1835) appointed a number of Assistant Commissioners in 1838 instructing them to ascertain

"the moral, intellectual and physical condition of numerous and widely scattered population of handloom weavers... to ascertain that condition, not only at present but also during many previous years, and to compare it at corresponding periods with that of other labouring classes in the community."

Then, having assessed the effect of the depression of the trade on the workforce the Commissioners were asked to trace the causes and suggest corrective measures to alter the situation.

For our purposes, the most important Assistant Commissioners Report is that on the south of Scotland by Jellinger C Symons, published in February 1839. See:

Reports of the Assistant Commissioners on Handloom Weaving in Scotland, Parliamentary Papers, Accounts and Papers, Volume XLII, 'Factories, Handloom Weavers', 1839, pp 1-96. (Previously quoted passages on aims and methods are from J C Symons, p 7).

Much of the evidence in these reports was in the form of testimony made on the weavers behalf. But Symons argued that the most important evidence on actual conditions came from weavers themselves during his

"personal visits to their houses and workshops, a practice which I extensively adopted, for the most part paying these visits when my presence was wholly unexpected and at all times of the day."

(Symons, op cit, p 7).

Symons inquiry was based on a series of public courts held throughout the area assigned to him; namely, the region south of the Forth and Clyde. Airdrie, by this time a parliamentary burgh and a recognised centre of weaving, was one of the places in which a public court was held.

Evidence on the condition of Airdrie weavers is scattered throughout the Report on South Scotland and some of it is tabulated on page twenty-six.

The year 1786 as that when pullicates took over in Airdrie weaving is given by Symons on page six.

52. Mack, op cit, p 521.

Tambourers were those, often children, who decorated finished muslin (delicately woven cotton fabric used for dresses, curtains, etc). According to Mack, op cit, p 521, the tambourers of New Monkland were

"children who flower muslin with the tambourer needle."

He estimated there were 202 in 1793. By 1838-9 tambourer work in Airdrie had disappeared altogether. (Symons, op cit, p 26).

53. The eclipse of the linen industry by cotton:

Norman Murray, op cit, pp 3-4.

54. Farmers in 1793, 204.

Mack, op cit, p 521.

55. Ibid, p 25.

Murray derives much of his evidence on Airdrie weaving from a research paper by one J D Knox, entitled, 'The Hand Loom Weavers in the Industrial Revolution Geography of Airdrie, Scotland', University of Toronto, 1967.

I have been unable to obtain any copy of this important piece of work on Airdrie. When quoting from Murray quoting from Knox, it seems only fair to give Knox first acknowledgement.

56. J D Knox, in Murray, op cit, p 53.

57. The control of handloom weaving by yarn merchants was well established in the eighteenth century in the linen industry and this was carried over into cotton. With capital invested in raw materials, warehouses and

stock these manufacturers were the capitalists of the putting-out system.

Glasgow formed a nucleus of this industrial activity with agents putting out work to places as far distant from one another as Perthshire to the north-east and Irvine and Maybole to the west.

Agents were the manufacturers' representatives in the weaving communities. They were responsible for giving out webs, collecting finished pieces of cloth and for paying the weavers by the piece. In social and economic status, agents were located above handloom weavers. They represented in themselves a powerful and important socio-economic group especially in the smaller weaving communities of west-central Scotland. Indeed, that agents had proliferated throughout weaving districts remote from the Glasgow nucleus of the industry was made clear by the

"howls of execration which greeted them not only in the somewhat tendentious weavers' press or in the radical press, but also in the more moderate Glasgow Herald of the 1830s."

(J D Knox, in Murray, op cit, p 17).

58. According to Murray, (op cit, p 28), at both Glasgow and Airdrie about twenty percent of handloom weavers were journeymen.

"If these centres mirrored the general experience of the south of Scotland, where four ninths of the labour force were not adult, male heads of families, then it is clear that at both Glasgow and Airdrie some quarter of handlooms were operated by women and children in the late 1830s.... It is also very likely that the proportion of female and child labour increased over time when, with falling living standards, all available members of the family were put to work."

59. Further details of the structure of the handloom weaving industry:

Murray, op cit, especially Chapter 2: 'The Labour Force', pp 13-39.

60. For incomes among handloom weavers:

Murray, op cit, especially Chapter 4: 'Real Incomes', pp 84-121.

61. Symons, op cit, p 19, noted that weavers in general were keen gardeners. However, Murray, op cit, p 107, argues that by the 1830s, Airdrie weavers were



exceptional in that they owned their kailyards rather than rented them.

62. Murray, op cit, pp 103-106.

63. Porridge and pease brose, as Symons noted, (op cit, p 18), were staples in the traditional Scots diet, for poor and rich.

Details on weavers' food habits:

Murray, op cit, pp 99-102.

64. Mack, op cit, p 515. Calculated that there were about two hundred milk-cow kept in Airdrie village.

65. Symons, op cit, p 18

A revealing feature of weavers' experience was that meat consumption declined considerably as a part of their eating pattern and by 1810 had disappeared altogether from the weekly diet of many weavers. Murray, op cit, p 99.

66. Murray, op cit, p 8.

67. J T Rankin, in MacArthur, op cit, p 214.

68. See: Murray, op cit, especially Chapter 7: 'Cultural Change', pp 161-181.

Smout, op cit, Chapter XVII:1, 'The Handloom Weavers', pp 393-402.

Symons, op cit, pp 1-96.

69. Murray, op cit, Chapter 7, pp 161-181. Chapter 9: 'Radical Attitudes and Activities', pp 208-240.

70. Murray, op cit, Chapter 7.

71. Symons, op cit, p 45.

72. Ibid, p 44.

73. Ibid, p 26.

74. William Mack, (op cit, p 518), reported that in 1793 there were four different charitable societies in Airdrie village,

"who have about £500 of stock and are very useful in supporting poor members."



Two of these four were almost certainly weavers' societies: the Airdrie Weavers' Society (1781) and the Airdrie First of August Society, the Brotherly Weavers (1790). A third weavers' society, Airdrie First of April Society was founded in 1796.

By 1800 the Airdrie Weavers' Society alone had 400 members (population of Airdrie at first decennial census [1801] 2,745) though some of these would also have been members of the other two weavers' societies as well.

Short account of the Airdrie friendly societies:

George Thomson, 'Our Friendly Societies' and 'Weave Truth with Trust': two short essays contained in The Book of Airdrie: Being a Composite Picture of the Life of a Scottish Burgh, Jackson, Glasgow, 1954, pp 121-133.

75. St Joseph's Lodge of Free Husbandmen Gardeners (1810).

Airdrie Friendly Free Gardeners' Society, later

Airdrie Greenhouse Lodge of Free Gardeners (1812).

The Olive Lodge (1823).

76. Short narratives of the early freemasons of Airdrie:

MacArthur, op cit, pp 395-404.

Knox, op cit, pp 99-106.

The main lodges were:

Lodge of St John's Operatives, No 166, (1786).

Lodge of St John's Operatives, No 203, (1788).

Lodge of New Monkland Montrose, No 88, (1762).

77. Symons, op cit, p 2.

78. Ibid, p 2.

79. Decennial Census figures for 1821 and 1841 respectively.

80. An estimate made by Symons, op cit, p 2.

81. Symons, op cit, p 26.

82. Description and analysis of the decline of handloom weaving in Scotland:

Murray, op cit.

83. Ibid, pp 7-8.

84. Symons, op cit, p 53.

85. Ibid, pp 53-54.

86. Ibid, p 53, 95.

87. Ibid, p 26.

88. Ibid, p 26.

89. Ibid, p 26.

90. James Begg, 'Parish of new or East Monkland, 1835', New Statistical Account of Scotland, Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1841, Volume VI, Lanark, pp 245-246.

Begg estimated that common labourers were getting ten or twelve shillings a week, while skilled craftsmen such as carpenters, slaters and masons could receive anything upwards of fifteen to eighteen shillings a week.

The weavers of New Monkland and Airdrie were, by contrast,

"very ill paid and have poor wages... in Airdrie many of the weavers are feeble and small in stature."

(Begg, op cit, p 245).

For southern Scotland generally, Symons, (op cit, p 50), argued that

"the physical condition of other classes is greatly superior to that of the handloom weavers. They are almost uniformly better fed, better clothed and better housed, the only exceptions I have seen are the agricultural labourers in the Highland districts, and a portion of the population of Glasgow."

91. Symons, op cit, pp 60-61.

92. Ibid, p 26.

93. Ibid, pp 60-61.

94. Paul Mitchell, 'Hand-loom Weavers' Trade Unionism in Airdrie, 1832-1837', Unpublished BA Dissertation, School of History, Manchester University, 1986.

95. Murray, op cit, p 53 and pp 141-142.
96. Extracts from the Minutes of the Airdrie Weavers' Society, in MacArthur, op cit, p 397-398.  
  
(Airdrie Weavers' Society Minute Book 1781-1876 also available in Airdrie Public Library).
97. Ibid, p 398.
98. Murray, op cit, especially Chapter 8: 'Attempts at Trade Unionism', pp 182-207.
99. Mitchell, op cit, p 28.
100. Murray, op cit, Chapter 8, esp. pp 185-190.
101. By which date Symons, (op cit, p 55), thought the weavers' unions were futile and no more than a gesture of despair.

"Combinations of weavers... are wholly extinct to any effective purpose at present....

Strikes among handloom cotton weavers are now allowed, even by themselves, to be wholly impracticable. Not only does this arise from the geographical dispersion of their body, from their not working in bodies together and from their poverty preventing... contributions essential to the machinery of unions; but also from another and far more potent cause, and one which alone explains the difference in wages between power and handloom artisans; I allude to the investment of fixed capital by the EMPLOYER in the one case, and by the EMPLOYED in the other.

The cotton spinner when he strikes, injures and stagnates the capital of his employer; hence his power. The handloom weaver when he strikes stagnates his own capital viz, his loom, and injures himself; hence his weakness."

102. Symons, op cit, p 44.
103. Ibid, p 18.
104. Ibid, pp 44-45.
105. Ibid, pp 44-45.
106. Ibid, pp 44.
107. Ibid, pp 45.
108. Murray, op cit, pp 13-39 and especially, pp 31-35.

109. Ibid, pp 68-71.
110. Symons, op cit, p 54.
111. Murray, op cit, pp 68-69.
112. Ibid, p 74.
113. Ibid, p 69.
114. Symons, op cit, p 19.
115. Ibid, p 19.
116. Ibid, p 19.
117. Ibid, p 45.
118. Ibid, p 55. And Murray, op cit, p 200. Also Chapter 6 following.
119. Murray, op cit, p 200.
120. Mitchell, op cit, and Chapter 6 following.
121. General introduction to workers participation in Scottish Radicalism:
- Smout, op cit, Chapter XVII:3, 'The Working Class and the Radicals', p 412-420.
- W Hamish Fraser, 'Patterns of Protest', in Devine and Mitchison, op cit, p 268-291.
- For specific involvement of weavers:
- Murray, op cit, Chapter 9: 'Radical Attitudes and Activities', p 208-256.
122. Smout, op cit, p 415-416.
123. Ibid, p 415, and Murray, op cit, p 214.
124. Murray, op cit, p 214.
125. Ibid, p 215.
126. Ibid, p 218-219.
127. Ibid, p 219.
128. Smout, op cit, p 419.
- Murray, op cit, p 219-227.

129. Smout, op cit, p 419.
130. Murray, op cit, p 222.
131. Ibid, p 221.
132. Ibid, p 224.  
Smout, op cit, p 418.
133. Murray, op cit, p 224.
134. Smout, op cit, p 418.
135. For details of Airdrie radical leaders, 1819-20:  
Knox, op cit, p 56.  
J T Rankin, in MacArthur, op cit, p 218.  
Mitchell, op cit, p 21-22.
136. MacArthur, op cit, 402.
137. "At the time of what were called the Radicals... my father, although always an advocate of reasonable reform, yet because some of them maintained theories of spoliation to be promoted by force and civil war, and were supplying themselves with pikes and other instruments, denounced them from the pulpit and declared that it was an attempt on the part of the 'scum of the earth'... to become rulers of the nation. It was alleged at that time that some of the leaders of the Revolutionists in Airdrie were proposing to divide the different estates....  
  
They were violent, and threatened to shoot all who should oppose them, and my father among the rest. He adopted his measures at once, sent away his family, but set the enemy at defiance himself. I remember well being sent as a child, in a cart covered with blankets, with all the rest of the family, to the neighbouring manse at Slammanan.... But my father himself would not move, continued to live at the [New Monkland] manse, continued to denounce what he regarded as unsound views from his pulpit and walked the streets of Airdrie as if nothing were happening...."  
  
From autobiographical section comprising James Begg jnr memoirs in  
Thomas Smith, op cit, pp 7-8.
138. Knox, op cit, p 56.

139. Known today as the Airdrie Old Union Band.
140. Knox, op cit, p 56.
141. J T Rankin in MacArthur, op cit, p 215.  
Knox, op cit, pp 56-57.  
Knox figure for the two companies, officers and men was 150, Rankin's figure, 240.
142. Consisting mainly of the mid-Lothian Yeomanry and some companies of the Rifle Brigade. The commander of the whole forces was Sir Harry Smith "distinguished hero of Aliwal".  
Rankin in MacArthur, op cit, p 215.
143. A list of the officers names and occupations is given in:  
Knox, op cit, pp 56-57.
144. More on the Nisbetts of Cairnhill, MacArthur, op cit, p 195.
145. See Chapter 7, ff 156.
146. Rankin in MacArthur, op cit, p 216.
147. Miss Margaret Aitchison subscribed £300 to help in procuring the Act.  
Rankin in MacArthur, op cit, p 216.
148. For terms of the Act:  
Rankin in MacArthur, op cit, p 216.  
MacArthur, op cit, p 218.  
Knox, op cit, p 60, 63.
149. Knox, op cit, p 60.
150. This later arrangement lasted until 1833.
151. MacArthur, op cit, p 218.
152. Although the proprietor of Airdrie estate had right to nominate the town clerk, the clerk was to be  
"in all respects under the direction of the magistrates and town council, who were to have the power of fixing and regulating his fees."

MacArthur, op cit, p 218.

153. List of the first town councillors and their occupations: MacArthur, op cit, p 218.
154. List of town councillors from 1821-1921, and their occupations: Knox, op cit, Appendix V, p 85-88.
155. T C Smout, A Century of the Scottish People, 1830-1950, Collins, Glasgow, 1986, p 9.
156. T C Smout, A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830, p 230-239.
157. Symons, op cit, p 50.
158. Ibid, p 50.
159. Ibid, p 50.
160. E J Hobsbawm, The Invention of Tradition, Cambridge University Press, 1983.
161. Extracts from the Minutes of the Airdrie Weavers' Society in MacArthur, op cit, p 400.
162. Airdrie Weavers' Society new regulations (1873), Article I, reproduced in MacArthur, op cit, p 403.
163. As quoted in MacArthur, op cit, p 401.
164. Ibid, p 401.
165. Ibid, p 402.
166. Ibid, p 402.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### OUT OF THE FOWLER'S SNARE: RELIGION AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNITY AT AIRDRIE C1790-1820

#### The Missing Link

By the early 1820s social and economic changes in New Monkland parish had contributed to the rise of a distinctive community in Airdrie. The success of the Airdrie burgh movement had given the town political and legal status. It had become a bounded community in its own right. As such, increasingly and at various points the burgh presented a challenge to the older parochial identity of New Monkland.

In the arguments about community at Airdrie as so far set out religion is the crucial missing link. To try to extract religion from the general social and economic survey of the previous chapter using some kind of intellectual fractional distillation is a dangerous exercise. It is to impose a compartmentalisation on our material which could lead to the assumption that for the period under discussion people's consciousnesses were similarly compartmentalised. But it is important to recognise that the preceding chapter is not the background

against which we should view religion and religious continuity and change because religion is embedded in that background.

Although from the later eighteenth century religion became a "focus for social division and the fracturing of rural communities",<sup>1</sup> in some places religion shaped new industrial communities' identities because, among other things, it provided continuity as well as change. Moreover, religious change could be expressed through social and economic changes.

Airdrie and the Erosion of New Monkland Parish  
Community Identity, 1690-1790

The rites and practices of popular religion in pre-industrial Scotland

"were centred on a communal experience which enveloped all, including the casually apathetic and the non-churchgoer."<sup>2</sup>

Religious taxes, session justice and religious belief were the fundamental ties between Church and people.

New Monkland parish kirk during the eighteenth century provides a good example of religion in its pre-industrial form. Through minister and kirk session, parish school and poor fund New Monkland kirk was a primary focus of

community identity. It penetrated the lives of parish inhabitants in the four major relationships which "bound the people to the Established Church: economic, judicial, devotional and educational."<sup>3</sup> As in parishes throughout Scotland, churchgoing in New Monkland was an occasion for devotion and edification but also for business, the weekly renewal of social contacts, and pleasure. Sunday worship brought the scattered population of the parish together more regularly than did any other communal activity and provided the opportunity for the free exchange of news and gossip.<sup>4</sup>

From 1690 to the 1730s the heritors and elders of New Monkland enjoyed almost undisputed control of local civil and ecclesiastical affairs. The power which they exercised through the kirk session was markedly reinforced when in 1690 they took full advantage of an Act concerning patronage passed by the Scottish Parliament in July of that year.<sup>5</sup>

Under the terms<sup>6</sup> of this act the right to present candidates for the ministry to livings was removed from the existing patrons. It was given to the heritors and elders collectively in each of the parishes of Scotland. Moreover, the new arrangements included an element of congregational democracy. In all vacancies the heritors and elders were to propose a person to the congregation for approval. The congregation had the right to disapprove of

the nominee but if they did so the reasons had to be stated to the Presbytery. Presbytery would then make the final decision as to whether or not the nominee could be appointed to the parish.

The act also required the heritors and elders to pay the deprived patron the sum of 600 merks by way of compensation for loss of his rights. In return the heritors and elders were to receive from the former patron a formal Note renouncing his rights of presentation.

By 1710, of all the parishes in Scotland only the heritors and elders of New Monkland and Old Monkland had actually paid their 600 merks to the deprived patron (in both cases, the College of Glasgow) and received a Note of Renunciation. This meant that New Monkland was one of only two parishes where heritors and elders had become legal patrons. Consequently, Queen Anne's restoration of patronage Act of 1712<sup>7</sup> did not alter the arrangements at New Monkland - at least in theory. In practice there was some doubt as to whether or not the 1712 Act affected the operation of the congregational disapproval clauses of 1690. And, as we will see, when in 1732-3 patronage became a contentious issue in the parish it was the act of 1690 rather than of 1712 which was the immediate cause of conflict and the origin of Dissent.

The 1770s saw New Monkland kirk taking steps to adjust to a changing ethos in the parish resulting from the demographic and economic development of the Airdrie settlement. The rise of Airdrie produced a concentration of people and trade in one small area of the parish some two miles south of the parish kirk. Heritors and kirk session were aware that such a concentration of people at Airdrie could, if not fully brought into the orbit of the kirk, threaten the traditional community identity of the parish.

When in 1776 the kirk required extensive repairs, the heritors decided to enlarge the building. They agreed specifically to take into account the people of Airdrie.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, this decision was in part prompted by a clearly expressed desire "from the feuars and inhabitants of the town of Airdrie..."<sup>9</sup> to contribute to the parish church extension project if they received in exchange a fitting proportion of seating allotments.<sup>10</sup>

In 1777 the kirk was entirely rebuilt. Subscribers at Airdrie met one quarter of the expenses and in return were allocated one quarter of the seating allotments. The extended kirk could now accommodate 1200 people.<sup>11</sup>

Three points stand out as being of particular importance in New Monkland extension project of the 1770s.

First, the Airdrie residents' willingness to contribute to the rebuilding costs saved the New Monkland heritors some money.

Second, the extension of the premises to accommodate residents at Airdrie specifically indicates that the heritors and kirk session (which included Airdrie men) recognised that in future years the expansion and development of Airdrie was not only to be expected but would also be of critical importance in the civil and ecclesiastical affairs of all New Monkland parish. The inclusion of Airdrie residents, while it was certainly intended to consolidate the power of the Established Church, was neither wholly reactionary nor the work of a backward-looking rural elite. It was an attempt to anticipate the future and prepare for it.

Third, and most importantly, the new church was built with the help of Airdrie money highlighting the existence of a prosperous group of people in or near the town with vested interests in its social and economic development. Indeed, the original subscription paper<sup>12</sup> listing Airdrie benefactors to the rebuilding project shows a high proportion of merchants, shopkeepers and skilled artisans, including weavers. When the New Monkland heritors agreed to allow Airdrie residents to contribute to the costs of the kirk's extension in return for proper accommodation - and therefore more representation - this was a concession

to professional, commercial and artisan interests that were increasingly centred in and around Airdrie. And with New Dissent on the march in the locality, fear of alienating the Airdrie merchants, shopkeepers and weavers, and of pushing them towards dissent might well have been a key factor in the heritors' final decision to expand.

The attempt by New Monkland kirk to embrace the Airdrie settlement and so remain the focal point of the parish community was in the long-run unsuccessful. By the early 1790s, as William Mack noted, there was a chapel of ease attached to New Monkland kirk paid for by voluntary subscription and set apart at Airdrie, and also a meeting-house of the Burgher Associate Church in the town.<sup>13</sup> New Monkland kirk was no longer either the sole religious interest or even the sole Established Church interest. These were unmistakable signs that in matters of religion, as much as in economics and politics, Airdrie would go its own way and in so doing would transform the religious ethos of the whole of New Monkland parish.

What William Mack's Statistical Account of New Monkland failed to acknowledge was that the Established Church had never been the only religious interest in the New Monkland parish. From the time of the Revolution Settlement dissent in the form of the Cameronians retained a small but notable influence. The Cameronians and their heritage have an



important place in the cultural and symbolic construction of community at Airdrie.

### Covenanter Country: Bridging the Gap Between two Community Identities

Throughout the nineteenth century churchmen in Airdrie made frequent reference to the Covenanting times of the 1670s and '80s.<sup>14</sup> Both the Old and New Monkland parishes had been strong Covenanting territories and local Presbyterian denominations of the nineteenth century were proud of this inheritance. The Monklands' churches vied with one another in their respective claims to be truly descended from the Church of the Covenants and guardians of the Covenanting spirit. Congregations of the Airdrie Presbyterian churches and, indeed, of New Monkland kirk were often reminded that an armed contingent from New Monkland parish and the Airdrie Estate within it had taken part in the battle of Bothwell Brig.

Late nineteenth century antiquarians and local historians of the Monklands also saw the Covenanting inheritance as somehow crucial to any understanding of the region. John MacArthur in his account of New Monkland parish history (1890) and later James Knox in his historical sketch of Airdrie (1921) both thought the Covenanting tradition important enough to warrant a listing of some of the

"martyrs" of New Monkland and the Airdrie Estate who had died in the fight at Bothwell Brig or subsequently as prisoners of the government.<sup>15</sup> The banner under which the Covenanters of New Monkland rallied, fought and died had been carefully preserved and by the close of the nineteenth century was on display at the Airdrie Public Library.<sup>16</sup> Here, this visible symbol of local Covenanting spirit was displayed not only for Airdrie churchgoers but also for the whole populace; all Airdrie inhabitants could, as it were, rally under it. As artefact and visible symbol the Covenanting banner gave continuing vitality and validity to the local Covenanting tradition while, at the same time, connecting the locality to the nation and to Scottish Christianity. Its eventual location at Airdrie, rather than at New Monkland kirk where it really belonged, enabled the people of Airdrie to claim it as their own. In this way the banner legitimised the new community identity focused on Airdrie. The very fact that Airdrie's beginnings were located in the turbulent 1670s lent credence to the locally held view that the spirit of the Covenanters permeated the ethos of the town. When James Knox paid homage to the Covenanting times in his history of Airdrie he referred to the old banner as "One of Airdrie's most precious relics..."<sup>17</sup>

The Covenanting myth linked contemporary Airdrie to a time when there was no Airdrie as such but it was not, to use

Hobsbawm's phrase, "invented tradition" or just the retrospective vision of men like MacArthur and Knox.

Descendants of the Covenanters of the 1670s and '80s, the Cameronians had never accepted the Revolution Settlement.<sup>18</sup> In this respect they were radically different from the New Dissent that was to be a feature of the Scottish religious landscape from the 1730s. Known from the nineteenth century as Reformed Presbyterians (RPs), the Cameronians' consciousness had been shaped by the experiences of their forefathers who until well on into the eighteenth century had been vilified and harried by the Establishment as non-compliers and stubborn, fanatical extremists.<sup>19</sup> Both the Monkland parishes harboured small but devoted congregations<sup>20</sup> of Cameronians through the eighteenth century and by the 1780s and '90s those in and around New Monkland were confident enough to proceed with the erection of a small meeting-house. Crucially, they chose to site their new church near the centre of the Airdrie settlement in the North Loan, which formed one of the arms of the town's cross.<sup>21</sup>

It has been suggested that of all the dissenters the Reformed Presbyterians went to "the greatest lengths to distance themselves from secular affairs and the State."<sup>22</sup> Such an assessment, however, does not match up to the tradition of Reformed Presbyterianism as practised in Airdrie - whatever the theory may have been.

Having completed their little meeting-house in 1795<sup>23</sup> the Cameronians in and around the town maintained a rather shaky existence in the early 1800s.<sup>24</sup> It was not until 1807 that they were granted a disjunction from the Glasgow Reformed Presbytery and given leave to form themselves into an independent congregation.<sup>25</sup> Various attempts were made to obtain and keep ministers but it was 1824 before a reasonable success was achieved in this matter with the appointment of Rev Thomas Halliday.<sup>26</sup> Halliday came into receipt of a stipend of £80 per annum with a house,<sup>27</sup> a settlement that ensured his position as a respectable member of the local propertied middle class. In his two years at Airdrie (he died in 1826)<sup>28</sup> Halliday managed to put the RP congregation onto an even keel for his successor, Rev John Carslaw minister from 1829 until 1847.<sup>29</sup> Carslaw did not keep the Reformed Presbyterians distanced from Airdrie's secular or religious affairs. Rather, he gave a lead in the development of many of the town's Evangelical and philanthropic initiatives, ranging from the Airdrie Savings Bank (1835) to Bible and Missionary projects. In all these ventures the RPs worked alongside both dissenters and Established churchmen.

From 1795, then, a small band of Cameronians with their own meeting-house gave legitimacy and living reality to the Covenanting tradition at Airdrie. Even in the competitive though by no means always hostile atmosphere of church life

in the early nineteenth century town the RPs were to be an active, influential and respected congregation of "God's Remnant".

If the Cameronian church at Airdrie served as a living testimony to the resilience of the Covenanting tradition then in another different but not unconnected way that same heritage had a profound impact on the religious culture of New Monkland parish and Airdrie: through the ministry of the Rev Dr James Begg.

Appointed to New Monkland kirk in the summer of 1801,<sup>30</sup> Begg was a fervent Evangelical in Chalmers' mould though disagreeing with that eminent doctor on a number of occasions.<sup>31</sup> In the person of James Begg the Evangelicalism of the Covenanters and the enthusiasm of the growing Evangelical Party in the Church of Scotland came together.

Begg was born at Douglas in Lanarkshire in 1763.<sup>32</sup> His parents were weavers and crofters,<sup>33</sup> and staunch Reformed Presbyterians.<sup>34</sup> He was the first member of his family to conform to the Established Church "and his conformity was deemed by his strict parents to be very close to apostasy."<sup>35</sup> As minister at New Monkland kirk for over forty years, Begg was to become a powerful and active figure in Airdrie's religious, political and social life during a critical and formative period in the town's history.

In spite of the split with his parents' church, Begg was neither ashamed of nor reticent about his roots in the religious culture of the Cameronians. On the contrary, he was grateful to the Cameronian tradition and an important propagandist for what he took to be its finest values: commitment, zeal, piety, a sense of God's power, majesty and awfulness in judgment, and, above all, an acute consciousness of God's immanence. Indeed, these touchstones of an older Evangelicalism were precisely those which a revived Evangelicalism within the Established Church and among New Dissenters was revitalising. It was the emergence of a strong Evangelical Party in the Established Church that enabled Begg to make the cross-over from Reformed Presbyterianism to conformity. As was noted in Chapter Three his son, James Begg of Newington, Edinburgh became more famous. A leading Evangelical during the Ten Year's Conflict and subsequently in the Free Church, the younger Begg's career is more easily understood in the light of his father's background.

Recalling his early years as a child at the manse in New Monkland, James junior noted of his paternal grandmother that "she was so determined a Reformed Presbyterian that she would never go to hear her son preach."<sup>36</sup> He remembered too that

"all my relatives by that side [paternal grandmother's] were nearly equally determined

Covenanters. Although they came to live at the manse occasionally... they would never enter the parish church, but doggedly walked the two miles to the Reformed Presbyterian chapel at Airdrie [the North Loan Church] ... It is one of my oldest recollections that I asked one of my uncles, who was a Reformed Presbyterian elder, why he did not go to the parish church. I received in the most solemn manner the following answer: 'Thou shalt not hear the instruction which causeth to err from the words of truth.'"<sup>37</sup>

These recollections were jotted down and published long after he had separated from the Established Church in 1843, and, not unnaturally, he recalled most clearly aspects of his past life that reflected well on his present. Nevertheless, his personal heilsgeschichte does not alter the substance of the general argument here; namely, that from 1801 in the person of James Begg of New Monkland there existed another channel for the Covenanting tradition to flow into the developing community identity at Airdrie.

Airdrie's Presbyterian attachment to Covenanting traditions was not eccentric. Identification with the Covenanters of the 1670s and of the 1630s and '40s was an essential feature of nineteenth century Presbyterianism generally and of Scottish Evangelicalism, especially in the dissenting denominations. The "spirit of the Covenanters" could, and did, appeal across all sections of society though perhaps most significantly to self-made men and skilled artisans who admired the firm independency that it suggested. The same spirit appealed also to a wide-ranging selection of social and political movements and organisations right down to the twentieth century. In each case, the Covenanting



myth was interpreted in ways which suited the arguments or positions of those making reference to it. As symbol - for this was the crucial importance of the Covenanting myth - it was ambiguous and therefore flexible both at national and local levels. Within the nation or the locality the Covenanting myth did not have to mean exactly the same things to different groups of people.

Late eighteenth and early nineteenth century proto-working class organisations and radical politics, especially in weaving communities like Airdrie, were inspired by the Covenanting myth.<sup>38</sup> Scottish Chartism in the 1830s and '40s drew strength and legitimacy from a democratic interpretation of it.<sup>39</sup> And during the Ten Years' Conflict the younger Evangelicals in the Church of Scotland consciously cast themselves as New Covenanters. This guise was viewed by more moderate churchmen such as Henry Cockburn as proof of a hard-headed, wild and dangerous tendency among the younger Evangelicals, although he understood the powerful impact of their histrionics on popular feeling and imagination.<sup>40</sup> Appeals to Covenanting history could thus be used by the younger Evangelicals to strengthen their claim that the Evangelical Party was the Popular Party. Immediately following the Disruption in 1843 the new Free Church used the language and tone of the Cameronians to denounce a "corrupted" Establishment, and made great play of the sacrifices and sufferings of the demitting ministers and their congregations.

David Stevenson has rightly pointed out that the Covenanting myth, in particular the idea that the Covenants of 1638 and 1643 were perpetually binding, "helped to give the Free Church historical legitimacy by placing it in the context of the country's past."<sup>41</sup> However, he has also argued that the identification of the Disruption with Covenanting ideology was "more symbolic than real."<sup>42</sup> This Stevenson implies, somehow diminishes its significance for he assumes that "symbolic" is synonymous with "superficial". But it is precisely because the identification was symbolic that it merits close attention. For the Covenanting myth not only gave the Free Church historical legitimacy it also gave that Church religious legitimacy. Free Churchmen staked a claim to be the true successors of the Covenanting spirit and the authentic voice of Covenant theology. In so doing they declared that the Established Church, by becoming Erastian, had repudiated the Covenants and hence the Reformation of Knox and Melville. The Established Church, so the argument ran, had forfeited the right to be called the National Church. Much of the bitterness between the Free and Auld Kirks in the aftermath of the Disruption stemmed from Free Churchmen's constant insinuations that those who had remained within the Establishment were little short of treacherous; they had betrayed Scottish Christianity and therefore Scotland and Scottish tradition by bowing to the authority of a Westminster government.

A new interest in Scotland as an independent nation was stimulated by the events of 1843. By late nineteenth century the Covenanting myth had become an integral part of Scottish nationalist consciousness and Home Rule politics. Stevenson has argued that sympathy for the Covenanters above the popular level "was limited".<sup>43</sup> But this is exactly its importance. In the post-Disruption years there was a tremendous outpouring of popular literature on the Covenanters (as Stevenson notes)<sup>44</sup> not least in importance of which were the turn of the century works by dissenting churchman Alexander Smellie.<sup>45</sup> Such popular works reached a wide audience but crucially it was among people in the middle, lower-middle and educated working classes that they proved most attractive. Moreover, at the same time as it became part of Scotland's literate culture, the Covenanting myth was also embedded in a less tangible oral culture.

In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, then, the Covenanters were established as archetypal figures; Scotsmen, patriots, guardians of freedom, independency and even individualism. Extreme perhaps but good, sincere men and women; heroes and heroines who "fought and bled and died in freedom's sacred cause."<sup>46</sup> When used and viewed in this context "freedom" was not simply a secular concept - the economic freedom of laissez-faire or the utilitarian freedom of John Stuart Mill.

It was a religious concept - indeed, a category of the sacred. Freedom of the Covenanting kind came to be seen at a popular level as an essential component in the Scottish frame of mind and temperament.

The appeal of the Covenanting tradition to Scottish Labour leaders from the 1880s to the Second World War is thus as understandable as it is well-known. Yet it has never been properly examined in its own terms. The Covenanters had become rooted in the nineteenth century Scottish popular imagination. As archetypal figures the Covenanters could be held up as a yardstick against which people could measure themselves with respect to the zeal and sincerity of their commitment, conduct or support for any causes - for example temperance or political organisations - to which they belonged. It did not matter if one was not in agreement with the seventeenth century Covenanters' ultimate goals or even if one knew very little about the Covenanting movements. For as a boundary, the Covenanting myth helped to delimit the nation as community. Although in the more respectability-conscious later nineteenth century Covenanting extremism was played down and romanticism emphasised, at all levels of interpretation the myth reinforced the distinctiveness of Scottish traditions against those of English Episcopalianism and of Roman Catholicism.

Scottish Independent Labour Party leaders favoured a radical democratic romantic-heroic interpretation of the Covenanters thereby ensuring that Scottish ILP politics were located firmly inside the boundaries marked out by nineteenth century Evangelicalism. There was nothing superficial, mystical or vague about this. Indeed, it was what enabled Labour leaders such as Keir Hardie to claim that the ILP was rekindling the flame of prophetic protest which, they argued, the Scottish churches had allowed to grow dim.

Furthermore, the fractiousness of nineteenth century Presbyterianism and the rivalry of competing denominations, each with their own claims on, and interpretations of the Covenanting inheritance meant that Covenanting symbolism was diffused throughout Scottish culture. Moreover,

"The Covenants had spoken, though in general terms, of civil as well as religious liberties and rights, and this meant that the heritage of Covenanting history and mythology could be exploited in pursuit of causes which were not religious, by men who were not inspired by religion."<sup>47</sup>

At Airdrie, then, the importance of the Covenanting myth was the way in which that tradition became literally and symbolically incorporated into Airdrie's developing identity, helping to shape and mould community there. In a real sense, the Covenanting tradition constituted part of the dynamism of the local universe. Airdrie grew up within a religio-cultural landscape where the spirit of the

Covenanters was an inescapable feature. The old banner of the Covenant of the 1670s was first and foremost a religious symbol but its meaning was not limited only to those who went to church. It was the visible post of a symbolic boundary. When late nineteenth century local churchmen and historians referred to the banner or to "the martyrs" of New Monkland parish, they consciously and without embarrassment conjured-up "memories" of the Covenanting times. In so doing they called the symbolic boundary into action and made plain their adherence to values based on freedom and independence. At the same time they pointed to the distinctiveness of their community.

The Covenanting inheritance had been crucial to the self-understanding of New Monkland kirk and parish in the days prior to Airdrie's rise. But through Evangelicalism, it was the new community centred on Airdrie and its many churches that was to carry the inheritance into the future. Just as the weavers myth straddled the gap between semi-rural Airdrie and New World industrial Airdrie, so the Covenanting myth served as an ideological bridge linking the older, more diffuse community identity focused on New Monkland kirk and parish with the newer, eventually dominant community identity of Airdrie.

James Begg of New Monkland played an important part in this bridging process, for in him the old-style Evangelicalism of Reformed Presbyterianism and the new Evangelicalism of

the Church of Scotland were conjoined. Moreover, the presence in Airdrie from 1795 of a Reformed Presbyterian church located at the heart of the weaving and commercial settlement not only provided continuing testimony to local Covenanting traditions but also helped to root a dissenting identity for the town. The North Loan RPs' chapel pushed forward the supplanting of a New Monkland community by that at Airdrie. It ensured the incorporation of traditions from the older community identity into, and for the benefit of the new. By taking an active part in the Evangelical initiatives that the Airdrie churches pursued, especially from the 1820s, Reformed Presbyterianism was a significant driving force in the creation of what was to be the essentially Evangelical and dissenting character of Airdrie's religious and cultural life.

Evangelicalism, New Dissent and Independency in Airdrie, 1790 - 1820: Ideological Continuity and the Fragmentation of the New Monkland Parish Community.

Ideological continuity in the form of Covenanting tradition could pull in different directions; it was not necessarily synonymous with conservatism or reaction. From the 1730s through the medium of Evangelicalism, Presbyterian New Dissent and the Covenanting tradition were forces leading to the fragmentation of the traditional parish community.



In New Monkland parish, New Dissent became centred at Airdrie. Through it the Covenanting tradition helped to pull New Monkland apart because it shaped community identity at Airdrie in opposition to the older parish identity. James Begg illustrates the way in which the Evangelicalism of the old dissenting Cameronians could enable some people to move back into the Established Church. New Dissent illustrates the way in which the Covenanting tradition could be used to beat a path out of the Establishment.<sup>48</sup>

Reformed Presbyterianism never really threatened the supremacy of the Church of Scotland in New Monkland. Established churchmen could afford to harbour a secret admiration for the Cameronian brethren not only because they shared Covenanting history but also because by the later eighteenth century the Cameronians were not numerically large enough to constitute a serious challenge. With the appearance of well organised New Dissent at Airdrie during the 1780s and '90s, however, there arose a challenge to the hegemony of New Monkland kirk which neither heritors and kirk session, Hamilton Presbytery, nor indeed, the General Assembly was prepared to ignore.

It has already been noted that New Monkland kirk tried to adapt to and accommodate the upwardly-mobile residents of Airdrie. Flexible response, however, proved to be more difficult when the New Monkland heritors and kirk session

dealt with discontent over the question of patronage rights in the early 1730s. Callum Brown has pointed out that the starting point for New Dissent in rural parishes was almost universally a product of conflict; conflict that arose between independent small landowners, merchants and skilled artisans on the one hand, and the more aristocratic class of large landowners on the other.<sup>49</sup> At New Monkland support for the Erskinite secession<sup>50</sup> of 1733 was certainly a consequence of conflict. But it is difficult to be certain from available records what the exact causes or structure of the dispute in New Monkland were. We know little of the numbers or social status of those people who decided to leave New Monkland kirk in the wake of the quarrel over patronage which developed in the autumn of 1732.

In October of that year New Monkland was preached vacant and various ministers were assigned to supply the pulpit until an appointment was made.<sup>51</sup>

At a meeting in the parish in November a Mr John Currie was apparently chosen by the assembled parishioners to be their minister.<sup>52</sup> Presbytery granted leave to proceed with the moderating of a call.<sup>53</sup> A call was duly prepared and signed in Currie's favour. He was taken on trials and eventually received as minister of New Monkland in March 1733.<sup>54</sup> As John MacArthur has pointed out, the whole proceedings in regard to Currie's settlement seem to have been perfectly regular:

"The heritors and elders, to whom the right of presentation belonged, appear to have acted in perfect harmony with the Presbytery, who do not appear to have acted in any way in opposition to the wishes of the congregation or the patrons..."<sup>55</sup>

It is equally true, however, that a proportion of the parishioners strongly objected to Currie's appointment because, they claimed, the proper procedure had not been carried out.<sup>56</sup> The protesters argued that Hamilton Presbytery had played too great a part and that Presbytery rather than the heritors and elders had effectively presented Currie thereby infringing the patronage rights of the parish as laid down under the Act of 1690.<sup>57</sup> The rights of the parishioners had thus been invaded and Mr Currie had been intruded upon them. What seems more likely, however, is that in the initial stages of Currie's appointment some parishioners had exercised their right to disapprove and so the case was referred to Hamilton Presbytery for a final judgment, in accordance with the 1690 Act (the congregation did not have a veto). Presbytery then decided to uphold Currie's nomination but in an atmosphere of heightening tension surrounding the whole question of patronage<sup>58</sup> the New Monkland "disapprovers" decided they could not accept Presbytery's jurisdiction.

Whatever the true reason for the conflict, it is beyond doubt that the dissatisfied parishioners

"availed themselves of the first opportunity to withdraw from the Established Church, and cast in their lot with the seceders."<sup>59</sup>

A praying society in New Monkland acceded to Erskine's Associate Presbytery in 1739<sup>60</sup> and for the next fifty years the seceders worked to maintain a level of support in the parish.

By the 1780s the strength of the Erskine-derived Associate Burgher Church<sup>61</sup> in the parish was focused in Airdrie. July, 1789 saw a small group of people meet in the town to take into consideration the "good effects that might arise from having a place of worship in this town."<sup>62</sup> A Committee of Management was set up and it was agreed to make applications by way of petition to the Associate Burgher Presbytery of Glasgow asking that independence be granted for an Airdrie church.<sup>63</sup> Subscription papers were circulated "to raise money for purchasing a property and for building a meeting-house."<sup>64</sup> September 15 was set for the giving of a sermon at Airdrie to publicise these plans.<sup>65</sup>

Events proceeded rapidly. On 7 November a piece of ground - or rather a tack of ground for 999 years - was purchased in Airdrie's Wellwynd, a well-known weaving sector of the town. Building commenced in early 1790. Accommodation was to be provided for 696 people and seat-rents began to be

collected following a Managers' meeting on October 19, 1790.<sup>66</sup>

The strength of the new Wellwynd Associate Burgher congregation was drawn from a wide area outside Airdrie. But, as the constitution of the first Committee of Management indicates, Airdrie was the focal point and best represented. Eight of the twenty committee members came from the town. Of the remaining twelve, five came from New Monkland parish (landward), five from Old Monkland and two from Shotts parish.<sup>67</sup> By March of 1791 the Committee was ready to apply to Presbytery for a moderation, and a stipend was eventually agreed upon at £60 per annum plus a house and a horse.<sup>68</sup> A manse was finally completed in autumn, 1796.<sup>69</sup> The first full-time minister of the Wellwynd Church, Andrew Duncanson, was duly ordained on 21 August 1792.<sup>70</sup>

A number of features of the Wellwynd story require closer attention and interpretation. First, the role played by a Committee of Management, the purchase of ground, erection of church building and manse, and the first stipend all paid for by voluntary subscription are clear indications of the independency of the Wellwynd Burgher Church. The Committee of Management was in no doubt as to who should have control of the church - the managers. During the early years of Duncanson's ministry, kirk session and managers openly quarrelled over the critical business of

disposal of church funds. On the one hand, the session claimed that

"it belonged to them to pay the minister's stipend and other public burdens, and, on that account, seat-rents and collections alike ought to pass through their hands."<sup>71</sup>

On the other hand, the managers contended that

"they were chosen by the congregation to manage all money matters and that the session, as a session, had no more right to interfere with these affairs than any private member had."<sup>72</sup>

Duncanson, in seeking to cool tempers and to remove the causes of acrimony, suggested the ordination of deacons, a solution which was accepted by each of the warring factions.<sup>73</sup> This incident is important for it indicates the high priority which New Dissenters gave to self-management and a degree of congregational democracy. Throughout the nineteenth century the New Dissenting Presbyterian churches, by the simple devices of an elected Committee of Management, and the election of a minister by those people who rented seats, guarded against minister and kirk session exercising tyrannous control of church affairs. Financial independence and a measure of democratic control were features of New Dissent especially attractive to the upwardly-mobile, whether among the rising commercial or industrial middle classes or among the skilled artisans.

A second important feature of the new Wellwynd church was its location and size. As the first church building, indeed first major public building in Airdrie (ante-dating the Cameronian's meeting-house by some five years), the appearance of Wellwynd meant that New Monkland kirk could not match the physical presence of the seceders. Ease of access to Wellwynd as compared with the longer trek to New Monkland may have been a contributory factor in any decision among discontented New Monkland attenders living in Airdrie to stop going to the parish church and begin at Wellwynd.

Furthermore, the new secession church was built in a weaver-dominated neighbourhood of Airdrie and only a very short distance from the cross roads that marked the residential and commercial centre of the village (Map 2). With accommodation for nearly seven hundred people, Wellwynd Church was a confident expression of the optimism of the Committee of Management and the subscribers, a response to a demand for accommodation for dissenters in and around Airdrie and New Monkland parish, and a bold statement of intent aimed at the Established Church as represented by New Monkland kirk and heritors. We have already noted that the total population of the parish according to Mack in 1793 was some 3,560 people with 1,762 of these living at Airdrie. As the larger proportion of Airdrie residents were at this time still prosperous



weavers we can reasonably conclude that the greater proportion of attenders and renters of seats in Wellwynd were weavers. Certainly in the future, the church was keen to publicise its self-image as a church closely associated with the weavers<sup>74</sup> but it is difficult to know in detail the strength or extent of this connection. There can be no doubt that by the 1830s and '40s Wellwynd was a church embracing all occupational groups and social classes. However, the Communicants' Roll for the first half of 1841 suggests the membership was predominantly lower middle-class and skilled worker with shopkeepers, tradesmen and weavers still of key importance. Of the 104 names entered on the Roll down to June 1841, twenty-two are clearly listed as weavers, twelve as grocers, six miners, five labourers, two carters, three smiths and the remainder scatterings of a whole variety of occupations.<sup>75</sup>

Just as important as the social composition of the Wellwynd congregation was the geographical spread from which they were drawn. By the middle of its third decade of operations, Wellwynd had consolidated its position in Airdrie and had become a church serving all parts of the town. The Committee of Management elected in June 1824<sup>76</sup> comprised two members from the Chapel Street area, two from Main Street and Burnie Braes, two from New Town West, three from New Town East, two from the Hallcraig area (another weaving neighbourhood), two from South Street (a bustling shopping area), two from Langloan (located outside the

burgh boundary to the west) and two from Clarkston (just outside the burgh boundary to the east). (Maps 1, 2 and 3).

A third and critical feature of the new Wellwynd Church of the 1790s and early 1800s was the ministry of Andrew Duncanson which lasted until his death in June 1819.<sup>77</sup> Duncanson's ministry is a key point in any understanding of the role of Wellwynd in Airdrie's religious history and in the cultural and symbolic construction of community there. In common with other seceding ministers, Duncanson was an out-and-out Evangelical. Indeed, as a Calvinist emphasising law, order, justice, civil and religious liberties, and foreign and home missions, he was the quintessence of late eighteenth-early nineteenth century Evangelicalism. Duncanson was one of the first contributors to the Evangelical Magazine. One of that magazine's reviewers paid warm compliment to Duncanson's sermon 'Divine Agency Necessary to the Propagation of Christianity' preached before the Glasgow friends of the London Missionary Society on May 17 1796.<sup>78</sup> In conclusion the reviewer lent support to Duncanson's "well chosen and well treated"<sup>79</sup> text (Isaiah 51 vs 9)<sup>80</sup> by expressing the hope

"that Directors, Missionaries and all connected with the Societies, will ever bear in mind that by the powerful energy of the Holy Spirit alone, the heathen can be converted to God."<sup>81</sup>

Although at the close of Duncanson's ministry the Wellwynd Church was firmly rooted in Airdrie, there had never been smooth, untroubled progress. Outstanding debts on the church premises were a constant concern<sup>82</sup> and, more seriously, in the early 1800s the Auld Licht - New Licht controversy<sup>83</sup> split the Wellwynd congregation. With regard to this last episode, matters came to a head in 1804 when those Wellwynd Burghers who demanded strict adherence to the principles of the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 (the Auld Lights) believing that they had a majority over those at Wellwynd supporting a more lax interpretation of the Solemn League and Covenant (the New Lights) demanded the key of the church.<sup>84</sup> Auld Lights argued that the New Lights, led by Duncanson, had departed from the principles which Wellwynd had been formed to represent. The New Lights should either adhere or leave. However, congregational democracy dealt the Auld Lights a cutting blow for on a vote the New Lights prevailed. Thus it was the Auld Lights who departed Wellwynd, abandoning possession of the building to Duncanson and the New.<sup>85</sup>

The Auld Lights immediately set about forming themselves into a new congregation as the "Original Burghers" and proceeded with the erection of their own church at Broomknoll. This was located to the south of the town centre on a road that formed the southern arm of New Town cross (Map 2). Building was completed by 1806 and in that year the first minister of the Broomknoll Church, Robert

Torrance was appointed.<sup>86</sup> Eighty members and eighteen adherents subscribed to his Call and a stipend was set at £70 per annum with a manse.<sup>87</sup> Over the next few years Broomknoll, organised and run on methods not dissimilar to Wellwynd, was to become a thriving church in its own right. There is no evidence to suggest that the division of Wellwynd in 1804 set back either the cause of New Dissent specifically or of religion generally. On the contrary, the appearance of Broomknoll not only catered for the demand for Auld Licht principles it also spurred both the Wellwynd seceders and the Established Church to new and greater efforts.

Any assessment of New Dissent in New Monkland parish and Airdrie must emphasise two points: first, the attraction which this form of Evangelical Presbyterianism so obviously had for a cross-section of Airdrie merchants, shopkeepers and skilled artisans, especially weavers; second, that Evangelicalism and New Dissent did not come into Airdrie from "outside". Both developed in New Monkland parish alongside, and more crucially within the developing Airdrie settlement. Evangelicalism through the medium of New Dissent contributed to Airdrie's being marked apart from the rest of New Monkland and from the older parish community identity. The Evangelicalism of New Dissent and of the Cameronians at Airdrie, with the Covenanting tradition to which both groupings made direct reference, formed symbolic boundaries. Indeed, these boundaries were

all the more important precisely because of the physical presence of organised congregations, church buildings and ministers. The Evangelicalism of James Begg of New Monkland could not prevent the process of fragmentation of the older parish community and, ironically, any chance of his keeping control of developments at Airdrie was diminished by the actions of the Established Church itself. For in the decade before his appointment to New Monkland, heritors and kirk session had accepted a proposal from Airdrie residents for the erection of a chapel of ease in the town. Before moving to a discussion of this Church of Scotland chapel scheme at Airdrie we must conclude the account of Old and New Dissent by remarking on the appearance from about 1800 of a small but enthusiastic congregation of Old Scotch Independents.

The Painters' Hall in the Baillie's lane seems to have been the meeting place of these Old Scotch Independents in their early days.<sup>88</sup> By 1809 the congregation was reputedly mainly Baptist in sentiment<sup>89</sup> largely because of the influence of Robert Haldane.<sup>90</sup>

Robert Haldane purchased the Auchingray estate near Airdrie in 1809, built himself an imposing house and attended meetings of the Independents at Airdrie.<sup>91</sup> For a time he acted as co-pastor with one John Calder, a working weaver who had himself converted to Baptist views.<sup>92</sup> When the Royal Commission on Religious Instruction's inquirers

visited Airdrie in 1836 (see Chapters Eight and Nine following) John Calder reported to them that he had been a pastor of the "Free Communion Independent Congregation" for twenty-eight years.<sup>93</sup> Moreover, he claimed that his Airdrie congregation belonged to the denomination of Independents who admitted "both Baptists and Paedobaptists"<sup>94</sup> into their fellowship. Such liberal arrangements were probably the result of a compromise that the Airdrie Independents had agreed upon back in the days of the Haldanes' and Calder's own switch to Baptist views.

As pastor, Calder acted unsalaried in accordance "with the principles expressed by the Apostle Paul in his lecture in the 20th chapter of the Acts."<sup>95</sup> Here tucked away in the 1836 Commission's evidence was the authentic voice of Evangelical Independency in early nineteenth century Airdrie.

Forward into Battle: Evangelicalism, the Established Church and the Consolidation of an Airdrie Identity.

The current of Evangelicalism<sup>96</sup> at Airdrie in the early 1800s was not solely distributed by New Dissent. North Loan RP sub-station and later that of Calder's Free Independent Church made their special contribution to the grid. To these must be added the power of the Established Church at New Monkland, especially with the appointment of

Rev James Begg in 1801. Conducted through the Established Church, however, but set apart from New Monkland kirk, Evangelicalism was shaping a distinctive Airdrie identity for almost a decade before Begg arrived on the scene.

By the 1780s the star of the Evangelical Party within the Church of Scotland was in the ascendant. There were two signs of the rising influence of Evangelical enthusiasm:- the movement for Foreign Missionary enterprise and, on the Home Mission front, initiatives to set up a network of extension charges or "chapels of ease".

The aim of the latter was "to modify the ancient parochial structure of the Church to deal with a rapidly growing population."<sup>97</sup> Not only the growth of population but also its redistribution was causing difficulties for the Church. In west-central Scotland in particular, the parochial system was coming under pressure as a consequence of the expansion of Glasgow and of the appearance in the countryside of proto-industrial communities, such as Airdrie, set at some distance from parish churches. Evangelicals argued that the Church must be shaken out of Moderate inspired lethargy and "lukewarmness" which was holding back a much needed expansion of Home Mission effort to deal with a changing Scotland. Lack of accommodation in cities and towns and the inaccessibility of older parish churches, they argued, threatened to create an unchurched populace open to the influences of indifference, scepticism



and worse, dissent. Complaints were voiced about rising numbers of non-attending absentee landowners and the bad example this set to the lower classes especially in the towns, where radical politics and dissent were most marked. There was concern too that newly enriched people among the middle classes and skilled artisans, in both towns and countryside, were deserting the Established Church and joining the dissenting churches. Here, they were attracted by and enjoyed a more open form of church organisation. This usually included congregational control of finances through an elected Committee of Managers (as at Wellwynd) and congregational participation in choosing a minister (the right to vote in this matter was usually limited to feuars of seats). Such freedom from reliance on State endowment and from patronage gave the dissenting churches an aura of independence and, apparently, a greater Evangelical zeal.

At this time, however, attachment to the Established Church was still held to be a guarantee of political loyalty to the Crown, a particularly sensitive issue because of the on-going French Revolutionary wars. The Established Church's role in society "was not defined by 'membership' (largely a nineteenth century innovation) but by its civil status."<sup>98</sup> Consequently, dissent, in the politically tense atmosphere of the 1790s and early 1800s, was associated with radicalism, Jacobinism and infidelity. At parish level, where the Established kirk sessions were local

courts, collectors and distributors of the poor's fund, and the supervising bodies of parish schools, "the parish church and parish state were virtually one and the same."<sup>99</sup> Here too, therefore, the expansion of dissenting churches posed a further threat to the Establishment and to the parochial system.

For the above mentioned reasons Evangelicals within the Church of Scotland were able to play on anxieties in order to win a measure of support for their ideas and goals (many of which were shared by Evangelicals outside the Established Church). This was the background to, and root of the initiatives with chapels of ease in the closing years of the eighteenth century. One of the first chapels was located at Airdrie, from 1790.

On 26 January of that year the Presbytery of Hamilton received for its consideration a petition signed by 434 "proprietors and inhabitants" of Airdrie and "other heritors of New Monkland parish".<sup>100</sup> The tenor of the petition suggests that it was the work of a group of people who had been influenced by the criticisms and ideas of the Evangelicals. The petitioners proposed that a chapel of ease be built at Airdrie and informed Presbytery that a voluntary subscription had already been started in anticipation of the scheme's being approved.<sup>101</sup> Funds were "nearly sufficient to erect the House, the seats of which, when finished... will raise a decent maintenance for a

preacher."<sup>102</sup> As to the status of an Airdrie chapel, the petitioners noted that it would be in subordination to Hamilton Presbytery and to the kirk session of New Monkland.<sup>103</sup> In this respect it would be on the same footing as chapels that had already been authorised for Shettleston and Chryston.<sup>104</sup> After careful deliberation, Presbytery gave the go ahead for the Airdrie petitioners' proposal on March 30 but emphasised that New Monkland kirk session would exercise jurisdiction and control over any collections taken at the chapel.<sup>105</sup> By February 1792 a chapel building had been erected in Airdrie's East High Street,<sup>106</sup> at the opposite end of town from the Wellwynd Burgher's Church though still only five minutes walk from it. (map 2) As with Wellwynd, then, the new chapel was close to the centre of the Airdrie settlement. Under an appointment by Hamilton Presbytery, Mr George Bower, "preacher of the Gospel", was the Airdrie Chapel's first incumbent.

That the proposal for a chapel at Airdrie had come chiefly from proprietors and inhabitants there, and only to a lesser extent from other heritors of New Monkland, is not without significance. In so far as the project was accepted by New Monkland heritors and kirk session, however reluctantly, it was a tacit acknowledgement that the extension of the original parish church in the 1770s had not proved to be an adequate solution to the problem of a developing community identity centring on Airdrie. Certainly, the Airdrie petitioners were concerned to see

that the Established Church retained control at Airdrie. But at the same time the petition amounted to a further display of the assertiveness of people at Airdrie. As the petitioners put it, the town had

"of late greatly increased, and contains at present upwards of 1,000 examinable persons of the communion of the Church of Scotland."<sup>107</sup>

Consequently, they continued, the town had grown too big to be properly provided with pastoral superintendence from the one Established Church minister at New Monkland kirk.<sup>108</sup> Moreover, New Monkland kirk itself was now too small to accommodate all parishioners, especially Airdrie's inhabitants.<sup>109</sup> In addition, the distance of New Monkland kirk from Airdrie was preventing "the numerous old and infirm persons in the village..."<sup>110</sup> from attending Divine Ordinances. The petitioners also made it plain that there was urgent need for a more visible Established Church presence in the town because the dissenters of the Burgher Association (those gathering round the Wellwynd project) were attracted by "the certain prospect of obtaining a numerous congregation..."<sup>111</sup> - particularly from among the thousand examinable Airdrie inhabitants connected with the Church of Scotland but with no proper accommodation. Any success for the dissenters in Airdrie would

"cause a division in the parish which the subscribers wish to prevent, being all firmly attached to the Established Church."<sup>112</sup>

In short, the chapel of ease proposal was presented as a necessary counter-attack against dissent at Airdrie with the express purpose of "putting a stop"<sup>113</sup> to it and thereby "preserving unanimity and harmony in the parish."<sup>114</sup> The Airdrie petitioners, while sincere in their protestations of loyalty to the Church of Scotland and to the unity of New Monkland parish, at the same time expressed their growing sense of distinctiveness in a warning to the Presbytery and, more especially to any opposition to the chapel being voiced at New Monkland kirk: if no chapel was forthcoming to cover the gap in Church of Scotland defences at Airdrie, then dissent would fill the breach.

Airdrie's chapel scheme was never intended to undermine the traditional community identity focused on New Monkland kirk and parish. But in effect this is exactly what happened. No doubt some of the landward New Monkland heritors were more than happy to consent to a chapel at Airdrie built by voluntary subscription. They would thus be spared expenses incurred in having to extend the parish church to accommodate the rising numbers of Airdrie residents. In addition, through the New Monkland kirk session they could make sure that an Airdrie chapel was kept on a tight rein. From the moment that chapel was opened, however, any theoretical or legal jurisdiction that the New Monkland heritors and session enjoyed could not control the one important practical consequence; namely, the chapel's

contribution to the separate identity of Airdrie and its inhabitants. By the 1820s the New Monkland heritors and session could not disregard the demands or oppose the activities of the Airdrie chapel without at the same time provoking hostility towards New Monkland, and a further consolidation of Airdrie's community identity.

The Airdrie chapel project was both reactionary and progressive. On the one hand it was intended to preserve and to promote the hegemony of New Monkland parish against the encroachments of New Dissent and the rise of Airdrie. On the other, it actually worked alongside dissent in helping to mark the separateness of Airdrie and a growing, distinctive sense of community there. Paradoxically, this latter position was promoted by the new regulations and constitution which the chapel came under immediately following legislation passed by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in May 1798.

By the later 1790s concern within the Established Church over unrestricted development of chapels of ease was reaching a peak.<sup>115</sup> Critics of the chapels claimed that the new schemes were being advanced at the expense of the authority of parish churches. The chapels were diverting collections from the support of parish poor, were being used to avoid the services of unpopular parish ministers and were serving as platforms for Evangelicalism.<sup>116</sup> Through the chapels Evangelical prejudices against patronage and

sympathy with ideas for congregational democracy were subverting the Church. Condemnation of the chapels was part of the wider criticisms being levelled at Evangelicalism in general and the anti-chapel party's growing demands for tighter regulation of chapels was in line with later attempts to curb the influence of Evangelicalism both inside and outside the Church of Scotland. For the moment, the tide of opinion ran in the opposition's favour not least because at the General Assembly, Evangelical ministers

"could easily be persuaded of the efficacy of the Moderate line on many issues - most notably on the 'potentially revolutionary' nature of Evangelical methods."<sup>117</sup>

After long debate in the Assembly of 1798 moves were taken to prevent the chapels from obtaining equal status with existing parish churches.<sup>118</sup> It was enacted that no chapel should be recognised until the relevant Presbytery had obtained full and detailed information and submitted this to the Assembly for approval. Regulations were drafted for the qualifications required by ministers appointed to chapels (to ensure against the 'laicising' trends evident in dissenting denominations), for the provision of stipends from seat-rents, and for the use of collections taken at chapels. More crucially, all chapel congregations were excluded from having a full share in the government of the Church by refusal of a place in Presbytery for their



minister and the subjection of chapels to the oversight of existing parish kirk sessions.<sup>119</sup>

At the Airdrie Chapel, George Bower had resigned in November 1796.<sup>120</sup> A petition was subsequently drawn up and submitted to Hamilton Presbytery asking that the chapel be granted the right to call a full ordained minister (that is, one allowed to dispense sealing ordinances).<sup>121</sup> Such a step, the petition claimed, was necessary to increase the credibility of the Church of Scotland mission in Airdrie and to consolidate success that had already been achieved in the promotion of "religion, morality and sobriety".<sup>122</sup> Presbytery considered the petitioners' requests and then submitted them for approval by the General Assembly.<sup>123</sup> Approval was duly given by the Assembly after it had passed the new rules for chapels. Hamilton Presbytery was authorised to proceed with the appointment of a minister.<sup>124</sup> One William Stark was elected to the charge and was inducted on August 23, 1798.<sup>125</sup>

Regulations for the Airdrie Chapel were embodied in a new constitution. Although designed to restrict the development of the chapel, the constitution in fact conceded many of the Evangelicals' demands for more open church organisation. Indeed, the constitution was remarkably similar in kind to those governing dissenting churches. The key areas of concern in the articles were

finances and management of the chapel, and the qualifications and election of the minister.

All property was vested in the Preses and other Managers, for the behoof of the congregation. The building was to be used only as a chapel of ease<sup>126</sup> (this latter rule was to prevent the chapel from being used for political meetings and suchlike). Hamilton Presbytery had jurisdiction over the chapel and while on financial matters the managers were answerable to their clerk or treasurer, they were under Presbyterianial scrutiny and could be summoned to the superior court to account for their conduct at three days notice.<sup>127</sup> Funds derived from seat-rents, the chapel's principal source of income, were to be controlled by the managers and applied by them to pay the minister's stipend and also the salaries of a precentor and a church-officer.<sup>128</sup> Minister's stipend, payable half-yearly, was to be guaranteed by the feuars of the chapel who were deemed liable to give security to Hamilton Presbytery for that purpose.<sup>129</sup> In addition, the constitution stated that the feuars should

"execute in favour of the minister and his successors in office, an heritable bond over the property of the House (chapel) in further security for payment of the stipend."<sup>130</sup>

Stipend was set at £52 10s.<sup>131</sup> After the stipend had been paid, any money remaining from seat-rents was to go into a sinking fund which, as soon as the debt on the chapel was

cleared, could then be used to augment the minister's stipend.<sup>132</sup> Collections were to be taken weekly at the chapel door or inside and all such monies would then be given over to the New Monkland kirk session to be applied by it "as part of a common fund for maintenance of the poor of the parish."<sup>133</sup> Not less than ten and not more than twenty men were to act as managers of the chapel. These were to be chosen tri-annually at a General Meeting of the congregation.<sup>134</sup> Ministers too would be elected but only renters of seats would have a vote.<sup>135</sup> In a contested election the appointment would be given to whichever candidate obtained a majority of votes. (The Preses of the election meeting would exercise a casting vote in the event of their being a draw). If there was only one candidate, he was to be accepted or rejected on a majority vote.<sup>136</sup> Such, then, were the principles designed to regulate and restrict the Airdrie chapel of ease. But these developments had the opposite effect from what was intended.

As its constitution implied, the chapel was a property as well as a congregation to be run on sound financial management principles. This not only indicated the socio-economic status of those who masterminded the Airdrie chapel scheme but also of those to whom chapels in general appealed; namely, people in the middle, lower-middle classes and among the skilled artisans. Indeed it was precisely such people that chapels were aimed at in the

first instance. In the towns and cities Evangelicalism drew much, though by no means all of its popular support from the rising middle class/skilled industrial working class continuum. However, it was in the towns and cities that Evangelicalism was finding an outlet in dissent. Consequently, chapels of ease were meant to retain or win back middle class and skilled worker support for the Established Church. Chapels could then provide the money, drive, initiative and manpower for further missionary enterprise among the labouring classes and the poor. (In later years, Thomas Chalmers was to be the most famous and enthusiastic proponent of this missionary method). Chapels were not meant to promote social equality nor were they intended to be instruments of social divisiveness. Ideally, they would create social harmony in the towns and cities by allowing for the intermingling of social classes - just as the older parish kirks had reputedly done in former times. As with the parish kirks, social harmony in the chapels would rest on the mechanisms of deference only now leadership and example would come from the middle classes and skilled workers rather than from aristocratic landowner families.

The limited nature of the franchise in the Airdrie Chapel also reflects the socio-economic status of those people in whom real power was vested. But although the seat-rent voting qualification did not produce universal congregational suffrage, it spread the power to elect

across a much wider socio-economic range than (theoretically) did the franchise qualifications in the political nation. Moreover, control of secular affairs by an elected Committee of Managers protected the congregation from any overweening sense of power which kirk session and minister might try to display. The congregation was thus given a greater sense of independence and participation as well as a democratic air. And, since a minister could not be intruded upon them, the congregation was not subject to the whims, passions or political loyalties of a patron. Indeed, the chosen minister could benefit from the spirit of mutual compact that his election suggested.

There can be no doubt that by legitimising an element of congregational control and democracy, the 1798 chapel regulations emphasised the difference between the Airdrie Chapel and the older New Monkland kirk. The chapel minister's exclusion from Hamilton Presbytery and New Monkland session's control of chapel collections in some respects left the minister freer to get on with his job. In any case, neither Hamilton Presbytery nor New Monkland kirk session could exercise effective jurisdiction. They could monitor, criticise and even admonish or censure but any heavy handed interference ran the risk of alienating the chapel congregation altogether.

Both the chapel of ease and the Wellwynd Burgher Church were schools of democracy in Airdrie. Separately and

together they shaped the developing sense of community there.

However, in two important respects the Airdrie Chapel was much closer to Wellwynd than it was to New Monkland kirk. First, the chapel circumvented patronage. This was less of a sharp contrast than might appear because, as we have seen, at New Monkland patronage was not in the hands of one single powerful landowner or outside corporate interest. Nevertheless, New Monkland's patronage arrangements still effectively meant landowner control. At the new Airdrie Chapel, however, merchants, shopkeepers and weavers held the reins of power, not landward heritors.

Second, the Airdrie Chapel had been built by voluntary subscription from Airdrie proprietors and inhabitants. This early example of what was to become known in the Established Church as "internal voluntaryism" had more serious implications for the unity of New Monkland parish than patronage differences between the chapel and parish kirk. Indeed voluntaryism was to be the hallmark of future Established Church enterprises in Airdrie. During the 1830s and '40s Airdrie churchmen were not slow to point to the voluntary giving of their fellow citizens as contrasted with the comparative niggardliness of New Monkland kirk heritors. In practice if not principle voluntaryism aligned the Airdrie Chapel with Wellwynd. Indeed, the dialectical tension between the chapel and Wellwynd meant

that the two continually worked to create a new sense of community centred on Airdrie. Airdrie, not New Monkland parish, was the battleground and strategic objective over which the chapel and Wellwynd fought. Regulation of the chapel in 1798 reinforced the distinctiveness of the chapel in opposition to New Monkland kirk and made certain that the chapel's priorities were Airdrie, not parish ones. And, cruellest of ironies for the Church of Scotland, the 1798 regulations enshrined the "dissenting" characteristics of the chapel. The chapel became a line of fissure in Church of Scotland operations in New Monkland and one which facilitated the further fragmentation of New Monkland parish, to Airdrie's benefit.

William Stark, the chapel's second incumbent, transferred to Stonehouse in February 1801.<sup>137</sup> On April 17 1802 the Glasgow Courier announced

"On Thursday 15th inst., Mr Joseph Finlayson, preacher of the Gospel in this city, was unanimously elected to the Chapel of Airdrie..."<sup>138</sup>

This appointment was one which some of the New Monkland heritors and session would have cause to resent, and some of the Airdrie Chapel feuars cause to regret. For Joseph Finlayson, although of Moderate rather than Evangelical temperament, was a political radical, in sharp contrast to his ecclesiastical superior and more conservative Evangelical colleague, James Begg of New Monkland.



Religion and the Construction of Community  
at Airdrie c1790 - 1820.

"The symbols of community are mental constructs: they provide people with the means to make meaning. In doing so they also provide them with the means to express meanings which the community has for them."<sup>139</sup>

One way to understand the history of religion in Airdrie is in terms of community; in terms of its role in the construction of an Airdrie identity as distinct from New Monkland parish.

There was no clear break marking the formation of community at Airdrie and the disappearance of the older community identity centred on New Monkland kirk and parish so the relationship between Airdrie and New Monkland must not be viewed as a comparison between two rigidly structured distinctive communities. Rather, Airdrie's identity emerged from the older community of New Monkland parish. The new town inherited much from the old parish and this inheritance was transformed and incorporated into the new town's identity. Continuity as much as discontinuity was an essential component of the Airdrie story. But continuity did not impede change and the formation of a new and distinctive community centred on Airdrie.

From the 1770s to 1780s within New Monkland parish there was a developing and increasingly pushy local patriotism

at Airdrie but one expressed, initially, through allegiance to the old parish kirk. While the New Monkland heritors and session sought to remain the focus for community identity, and to play a major role in shaping developments at Airdrie, there was at the same time a growing pressure group of Airdrie residents who were determined to ensure that New Monkland kirk would not be permitted to operate against their interest. Thus, the inclusiveness and flexibility of the New Monkland kirk session in the extension scheme of the late 1770s had serious religious, political and economic implications. By making provision for the inhabitants of Airdrie, in response to a demand from that quarter, New Monkland kirk and parish became a hostage to Airdrie fortune. Moreover, with the appearance of the chapel of ease the Established Church claim that the parish unit with the parish church at its centre as the basic structures of community identity was undermined, albeit unintentionally. In this sense, religion did indeed become a focus for social division. However, its contribution to the new community of Airdrie was by no means lessened. Quite the reverse. It was religion that consolidated Airdrie's distinctiveness. And one of the key ways in which religion did this was by promoting division.

A P Cohen has argued that any reasonable interpretation of "community" implies first, that the members of a group of people have something in common; and second, that they have something which distinguishes them from other putative

groups. Community implies simultaneously similarity and difference, both within a particular community and in relation to other communities.<sup>140</sup> Thus, for example, the larger community identity centred on Airdrie contained within it many other communities each with their own distinctive characteristics. These communities overlapped and any individual could belong to several at the same time - weaver-dissenter, weaver-Established Churchman, shopkeeper-Reformed Presbyterian and so on. But the larger Airdrie identity was itself distinguished from other larger community identities: Airdrie as distinct from New Monkland parish, or from Lanark or Glasgow and so on. Our concern is mainly with the framework of this larger community called Airdrie.

The sense of distinction, Cohen has noted, is embodied in boundaries for boundaries mark the beginning and end of community - physically and symbolically - and thus encapsulate its identity and are called into action because communities interact with one another.<sup>141</sup> Now in the years after 1821 one of the most obvious of Airdrie's boundaries was the burgh boundary. This was called into action on various occasions, most noticeably, as we shall see, in the 1880s against the encroachments and pretensions of the adjacent town of Coatbridge. However, the 1821 burgh bounds and later (after 1832) the parliamentary boundaries marked out an already established sense of distinctiveness that was the direct consequence of boundaries which

religion delineated. Cohen has argued that not all boundaries, indeed not all components of any boundary are always objectively apparent.<sup>142</sup> In the case of Airdrie's symbolic boundaries, however, certain components are clearly visible; namely Evangelicalism and dissent.

Any boundary may be perceived in different terms by people on opposite sides of it and by people on the same side.

"we are talking about what the boundary means to people, or more precisely, about the meanings they give to it. This is the symbolic aspect of community."<sup>143</sup>

At local level in particular, community is not oratorical abstraction but "hinges crucially on consciousness"<sup>144</sup> - and not on false-consciousness. Cohen has pointed out that symbols do more than represent something else. In fact, they allow those who use them to supply part of the meaning. And while symbols may be shared the meanings need not be shared in the same way but can be mediated by the idiosyncratic experience of the individual. Symbols give people "the capacity to make meaning."<sup>145</sup> Furthermore, the range of meanings of social categories can be

"glossed over in a commonly accepted symbol - precisely because it allows its adherents to attach their own meanings to it. They share the symbol, but do not necessarily share its meanings. Community is just such a boundary expressing symbol. As symbol it is held in common by its members; but its meaning varies with its members unique orientations to it. In the face of this variability of meaning the

consciousness of community has to be kept alive through manipulation of its symbols."<sup>146</sup>

Now in the symbolic construction of community at Airdrie, religion was fundamental. The churches at Airdrie were repositories of an immense wealth of symbols. As part of the Church universal they expressed the basic Christian traditions centred on the Gospel. As part of a more specifically Scottish Christianity they interpreted and transmitted the gospel message. And through Evangelicalism in the Scottish context the Covenanting myth provided a host of national and local symbols.

All of the churches in Airdrie by 1820 were intimately connected with Evangelicalism in one way or another and each one gave its own meanings to the shared symbols of that movement. Evangelicalism and through it the Covenanting myth constituted symbolic boundaries within which the Airdrie churches operated and which enclosed the sense of Airdrie's distinctiveness. Evangelicalism and the Covenanting myth were woven into the rough fabric from which Airdrie was made. They did not come as forces from "outside" because Airdrie was born of them.

Furthermore, the multiplicity of churches serving Airdrie's 4,860 inhabitants of 1821 ensured that community was founded on similarity but also on difference; on oppositions and variety. Community at Airdrie did not mean uniformity of behaviour or attitude. This was so because of

the flexibility of the town's Evangelical framework and one of its constituent elements, the Covenanting myth. New Monkland kirk was left well outside of the new burgh boundaries, an exclusion that was confirmation of what was already happening literally and symbolically. Between 1790 and 1820 it is quite valid to speak of a distinctive religious identity of Airdrie - Airdrie was predominantly Evangelical and dissenting. Indeed, the expansion of the Church of Scotland's operations in the town through the chapel of ease was an explicit recognition of the influence of Evangelicalism and dissent.

A P Cohen had argued that community is where one learns and continues to practise how to be social. It is where one acquires "culture"; that is, symbols which will equip one to be social.<sup>147</sup> At Airdrie, culture, constituted by symbols, was dominated by Evangelicalism and dissent. These appealed across all social classes of men and women and even to those who could be considered, and considered themselves to be outside of the Church as such. Furthermore, Evangelicalism and dissent shaped Airdrie's distinctiveness in the years prior to the upheavals of the 1830s and '40s; that is, before the influx of population (which included significant numbers of Irish Roman Catholic labourers).

As part of the general framework of Evangelicalism and dissent, the Covenanting myth enabled Airdrie to withstand

the discontinuities of industrialisation precisely because, like the weavers' myth, it contributed continuity to the sense of place. Evangelicalism and dissent marked out Airdrie's symbolic boundaries defining the limits within which community as culture operated. Religion was fundamental in the construction of community at Airdrie because it provided the town with a symbolic dimension which did not exist as some kind of consensus sentiment or form of false-consciousness. Rather, it existed as something for people to think with.<sup>148</sup>



### Notes

1. Callum Brown, The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730, Methuen, London, 1987, p 100.
2. Callum Brown, The Social History of Religion in Scotland since 1730, Chapter 4 'Religion in Rural Society', Methuen, London, 1987, p 100.  
  
See also: Callum Brown, 'Religion and Social Change' in T M Devine and Rosalind Mitchison, People and Society in Scotland, Volume I, 1760 - 1830, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1988, pp 143-162.
3. Callum Brown, The Social History of Religion in Scotland, Chapter 4, p 91.
4. Less regular but no less important than churchgoing were the great seasonal communion services or "Holy Fairs" of pre-industrial Scotland.
5. The Act concerning patronage of 1690 was passed by the then newly installed regime of William III in order to appease Presbyterian demands and ensure a solid foundation for the Establishment of the Church of Scotland (as a counter to the threat of resurgent Jacobitism).
6. For discussion of the 1690 patronage act: William Ferguson, Scotland. 1690 to the Present, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1978 edn, pp 13-14.  
  
Andrew Herron Kirk by Divine Right - Church and State: Peaceful Co-existence, Esp. III 'Kirk, Creed and Christian Conscience', St Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1985, pp 50-56.
7. Under Queen Anne's Restoration of Patronage Act of 1712, all those patrons who had lost their rights as a result of the 1690 Act but who had not been paid compensation and issued in return a formal Note of Renunciation had their rights restored to them. New Monkland heritors and elders had fulfilled all the requirements of 1690, hence arrangements remained unaffected by the 1712 Act.
8. Minutes of the New Monkland Heritors' Meetings as quoted in extenso for: 23 August 1776; 29 October 1776; 27 December 1776; 14 February 1777; 20 February 1777; 11 March 1777, in MacArthur, op cit, pp 116-119.
9. Minutes of the Heritors' Meetings, 23 August 1776, in MacArthur, op cit, p 117.

10. Minutes of the Heritors' Meetings, 23 August 1776, in MacArthur, op cit, p 117.

In the same minute the minister, Mr Maxwell reported to the meeting that there were 2,200 examinable persons in the Parish of whom 700 were located in Airdrie. The New Monkland kirk, he pointed out, could no longer accommodate such numbers.

11. Minutes of the Heritors' Meetings, 11 March 1777, in MacArthur, op cit, p 119.
12. Original subscription paper reproduced in MacArthur, op cit, p 120.
13. William Mack, 'Parish of New or East Monkland, 1793', The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791-1799, Grant and Withrington Reprint Edn, Volume VII, EP Publishing Wakefield, 1973, pp 516-517.
14. For lengthy details of the Covenanting Movement of the late seventeenth century in New Monkland, MacArthur, op cit, pp 43-52.

MacArthur's account is made up of extensive direct quotation from the famous and thoroughly partisan - History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution by Robert Woodrow (1722)

The fact that MacArthur uses this History without question is indicative of the importance of the Covenanters' story as myth; the myth was transmitted from generation to generation with little alteration and without embarrassment.

Of Woodrow's volumes David Stevenson comments:

"Woodrow's pious volumes became the standard account of the Covenanting Movement for Presbyterians of all social ranks for generations - and contributed much to the tendency to concentrate on the later Covenanters and largely ignore the early Covenanters who had actually ruled Scotland after 1638."

[Stevenson, The Covenanters: The National Covenant and Scotland, Saltire Society, Edinburgh, 1988, p 74].

15. Lists of the "martyrs" of New Monkland and the Airdrie Estate.

MacArthur, op cit p 45.

James Knox, Airdrie: a Historical Sketch, Baird & Hamilton, Airdrie, 1921, p 12.

16. To this day, the banner is on permanent display mounted on the wall - significantly - at the head of the stairways leading to the library's local history/archives sections.
17. Knox, (op cit, p 9) gives a full description of the banner. His description is almost an exact reproduction of that given by MacArthur (op cit p 159) which in turn is a repetition of James Begg of Newington in Thomas Smith, Memoirs of James Begg, James Gemmell, Edinburgh 1885, p 2.

An even earlier verbal picture of the banner featured in "Timothy Squint's" reminiscences of Airdrie in the Literary Album of 1828. Squint preceded his description thus:

"There arena' mony curiosities or antiquities in this parish [N Monkland] ... I min' o' naething else in the way o' antiquity in our town, unless it be the Bothwell Brigg flag. It's a pity but Sir Walter Scott kent there was sic a thing in Airdrie - I think he wad gang wud to hae't. The great-grandfather o' the present owner [Mr James Main, Coach Proprietor] o' this flag turned out wi' the Covenanters at the time o' the Bothwell Brig business; an' he was an offisher among the Covenanters, an' carried the flag for the New Monkland folk amang them. After the battle he escaped an' saved the flag an' a short sword he had worn at the battle, which were both securely kept and handed down to the present generation o' successors...."

(Airdrie Literary Album No 17, Sat. March 28, 1829, p 62). A number of points to note in this passage. First, Squint's dual-consciousness of New Monkland/Airdrie. Second, Airdrie's connections with the Covenanting Movement of the 1670s. Third, the reference to Sir Walter Scott. This last is particularly interesting because it accurately reflects the kind of reading material weavers enjoyed and at the same time refers the knowing local reader back to another tale in local folklore, namely that Old Mortality, on his wanderings round Scotland tending the Covenanter's graves, often visited New Monkland kirkyard to tidy the graves of Covenanting heroes there.

18. Modern General accounts of seventeenth century Scotland and the Revolution Settlement:

Gordon Donaldson, Scotland: James V - James VII, Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1978, esp. Part III: 'Revolt and Reaction', pp 295-401.

Ferguson, op cit, esp. Chapter I, 'The Revolution Settlement', pp 1-35.

T C Smout, A History of the Scottish People 1560-1830, Collins, Glasgow, 1972, esp. Part one, 'The Age of Reformation, 1560-1690', pp 49-192.

19. Standard history of the Cameronians or Reformed Presbyterians is:

Matthew Hutchison's riveting The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland: Its Origin and History 1680-1876, J and A Parlange, Paisley; J Menzies & Co., Edinburgh, 1893.

Also:

Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland: Historical and Doctrinal, Glasgow, 1876.

Standard concise reference work and succession of ministers:

W J Couper, The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland: Its Congregations, Ministers and Students, United Free Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, 1925.

Best and briefest account of the Covenanting Movements of the 1670s and of the 1630s and '40s:

David Stevenson, The Covenanters: The National Covenant and Scotland, Saltire Society, Edinburgh, 1988.

20. No reliable figures.

21. That is, the historic town's cross-roads around which the Airdrie settlement grew up (see previous chapter).

22. Callum Brown, The Social History of Religion in Scotland, p 42.

23. We cannot be absolutely certain about the date for the completion of this building. In his evidence to the Royal Commission Religious Instruction, Scotland [visited Airdrie Aug. 1836] the then North Lothian RP Minister, John Carslaw, gave the date of completion as 1795. (Eighth Report by the Commissioners of Religious Instruction, Scotland, Edinburgh, 1838).

Parliamentary Papers, 1839, Volume XXVI, p 140.

24. W J Couper, op cit, p 9-10, 40.

25. Ibid, p 40.

26. Ibid, p 40.
27. Ibid, p 40.
28. There is some confusion about the date of Halliday's death. Couper, (op cit, p 40) gives 1826. Hutchison, (op cit, p 440) 1827. MacArthur (op cit, p 302) appears to dispel all doubts

"His [Halliday's] mortal remains were committed to the tomb in the New Monkland Churchyard upon Friday, 16th February, 1826".

Potted biography of Halliday:

MacArthur, op cit, p 40.

29. Couper, op cit, p 40.
30. Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae [FES], Volume 3, Synod of Glasgow and Ayr, Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1920, p 272.
31. Generally sympathetic accounts of Begg's life and works can be found in:

MacArthur, op cit:

and the more famous biography of his son

Thomas Smith, DD [Prof. Evangelistic Theology, New College, Edinburgh] Memoirs of James Begg, DD, Minister of Newington Free Church, Edinburgh, James Gemmel, Edinburgh, 1885.

which incorporates the above James Begg's (jnr) reminiscences of his childhood in the manse of New Monkland. See esp. Autobiographical, Chapter I, 'Birth and Early Days', pp 1-43.

and Smith's own more circumspect Biographical, Chapter V, 'Dr Begg's Family - His Connection with Greenock'.

Begg of New Monkland's quarrel with Chalmers arose over the proper position of the communion table in the Church. See Smith, op cit, p 119-120.

32. FES, volume 3, p 272.
33. Smith, op cit, p 116.
34. Smith, op cit, p 4.
35. Smith, op cit, p 116.

36. Smith, op cit, p 4.
37. Ibid, p 4.
38. Stevenson, op cit, p 76.
39. Ibid, p 77.
40. Cockburn was fond of describing the Younger Evangelicals as the "Wild Party".
41. Stevenson, op cit, p 81.
42. Ibid, p 81.
43. Ibid, p 74.
44. Ibid, p 81.
45. Perhaps the most famous of which was Men of the Covenant.
46. Knox, op cit, p 9.
47. Stevenson, op cit, p 75.
48. Cf Hugh Watt, Recalling The Scottish Covenants, Nelson, Edinburgh, pp 67-94.
49. Brown, op cit, pp 103-105.

Also: C Brown, 'Protest in the Pews: Interpreting Presbyterianism and Society in Fracture During the Scottish Economic Revolution' in T M Devine, Conflict and Stability in Scottish Society 1700-1850, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1990, pp 83-105.

50. For background to and general accounts of the Erskinite or "First" Secession:

Andrew L Drummond and James Bulloch, The Scottish Church 1688-1843, St Andrew Press, Edinburgh, 1973, esp. Chapter 2 'The Coming of Division', pp 25-44.

John McKerrow, History of the Secession Church (2 Vols), Oliphant & Son, Edinburgh, 1838?9.

Concise account:

A Herron, op cit, pp 53-61.

51. Records of the Presbytery of Hamilton [RPH] 31 October 1732, Scottish Records Office, Edinburgh, p 223.
52. RPH 28 November 1732, p 224.



53. RPH 28 November 1732, p 224.
54. RPH 22 March 1733, pp 228-9.
55. MacArthur, op cit, pp 102-3.
56. Ibid, pp 100, 102.

Also: William MacKelvie, Annals and Statistics of the United Presbyterian Church, Edinburgh, 1873, pp 342-343,

from which the Wellwynd Church of Scotland Ter-Jubilee, 1789-1939, Airdrie, 1939, booklet draws much of its introduction.

57. MacKelvie, op cit, p 342.
58. Brown, 'Protest in the Pews' in Devine, op cit, pp 97-99.
59. MacKelvie, op cit, p 342.
60. Ibid, p 342.
61. For details of Associate Burgher Church early history:  
MacKerrow, op cit, Volume I  
MacKerrow, op cit, Volume 2, esp. Chapter VI, pp 196-242.  
  
Concise account placing Associate Burgher in amongst all other secessions and schisms from schisms:  
  
A Herron, op cit, Chapter IV, 'Auld Lichts an' a' That', pp 68-87.
62. Book Containing the Minutes and Transactions of the Burgher Committee and Society in Airdrie, 1789-1824, Scottish Records Office, Edinburgh.
63. Ibid.
64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.
66. Ibid. Seat rents ranged from one to four shillings.
67. Ibid.
68. Robert Small, History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church, 1733-1900, David M Small, Edinburgh, 1904, p 123.



69. Small, op cit, p 124.
70. Ibid, p 123.
71. Ibid, p 123.
72. Ibid, pp 123-4.
73. Ibid, p 124.
74. J D Knox, 'The Hand Loom Weavers in the Industrial Revolution Geography of Airdrie, Scotland', quoted in Norman Murray, The Scottish Hand Loom Weavers, 1790-1850: A Social History, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1978, Chapter 7, 'Cultural Change', p 165.
75. Wellwynd Communion Roll, 1841-1866, Scottish Records Office, Edinburgh.
76. Minutes and Transactions... Burgher Committee and Society in Airdrie 1789-1824.
77. Biographical Sketch:  
MacArthur, op cit, p 100 and pp 299-300.
78. Evangelical Magazine, February 1797, p 86.
79. Ibid, February 1797, p 86.
80. Isaiah 51 vs 9.  

"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake as in the ancient days, in the generations of old..."
81. Evangelical Magazine, February 1797, p 86.
82. Small, op cit, p 124, states that after the completion of the manse in 1796, at a cost of £250, the church's debt on property increased to "somewhere about £400". By the time of Rev George Sommerville's ordination as Wellwynd's third incumbent (Dec 1824) the debt stood at £450.
83. Detailed account of Auld Licht - New Licht controversy:  
MacKerrow, op cit, esp. Chapter VIII, pp 300-351.  
Concise account:  
A Herron, op cit, pp 78-80.
84. Small, op cit, p 124.

MacArthur, op cit, p 296.

85. Small, op cit, p 124.

Wellwynd Church of Scotland, Airdrie, Ter-Jubilee, 1789-1939, booklet, Chapter II.

86. MacArthur, op cit, p 296.

Knox, op cit, pp 40-42.

87. MacArthur, op cit, p 296.

88. Harry Escott, A History of Scottish Congregationalism, Congregational Union of Scotland, Glasgow, 1960, p 318.

89. Ibid, p 314.

90. Along with his brother, James, Robert Haldane formed a famous Evangelical duo and provided mind and money for an extraordinary revivalist movement that gripped late eighteenth century Evangelical imagination in Scotland and beyond.

The Haldane brothers have been characterised as the Wesley and Whitefield of Scotland. However, unlike Wesley and Whitefield, the Haldanes were laymen not clerics.

In the late 1790s the Haldanes' Evangelical zeal became famous when their home mission efforts resulted in the formation of the Society for the Propagating the Gospel at Home (1789). The aim of the Society and its branches was to evangelise the "dark places" of the country through the agency of itinerant preachers, catechists and schoolmasters.

Such aims and methods did not endear the Society or the Haldanes to the Established Church of Scotland, at this time still dominated by Conservative Moderates. Many Moderates denounced Evangelicalism as fanatical, ignorant and dangerous enthusiasm permeated by democratic views derived from the French Revolution. Moderate Presbyterians were also alarmed by the threat to the principles of a territorial parish ministry that itinerancy posed.

By contrast, the Haldanes argued that the Established Church's Presbyterianism was suffocating the Gospel. Presbyterianism was too rigid, staid and formal, and Moderates were uninspiring and idle. Moreover, Robert Haldane in particular had indeed been influenced by the French Revolution believing that it heralded the dawn of a new and better age for humanity.

All the Haldanes' schemes and indeed those of the wider Evangelical Movement - Sunday Schools, preaching laymen, distribution of tracts - were condemned by the Established Church during the 1790s. (The claims of the SPGH itinerant lay-missionaries and Sunday school teachers that the true Church was not in any one sect or denomination but scattered among all who hear the Gospel, was particularly irritating to Established Churchmen).

At the General Assembly in 1798 the Established Church moved to curb the influence of Evangelicals in its own ranks who were operating through the new chapels of ease. Legislation was passed to ensure tight control of chapels. Then in 1799 the General Assembly voted for two restrictive measures with respect to unqualified ministers and itinerant Sunday school teachers. This legislation had the express purpose of stifling the Evangelical Movement outside the Established Church. At the same Assembly a Pastoral Admonition was drawn up and ordered to be read from every Church of Scotland pulpit. The Admonition deplored the revolutionary and atheistic ideas from France and attacked the "presumption" of SPGH missionaries, and the Sunday school movement which allowed "ignorant or discontented" persons to catechise. It denounced the Haldanite Evangelicals' claim that it was the right of every man to preach the Gospel as anarchistical.

Undaunted by these assaults, the supporters of the Haldanes continued their efforts and, indeed, diversified. During the early 1800s the Haldane brothers themselves directed a plan for the provision of Tabernacles throughout the country, linked in fellowship, and organised along Congregational lines. However, in 1807-8 both Robert and James renounced infant baptism and adopted Baptist principles. This shift on their part split the Tabernacle Movement. Many people in Congregational churches took up the same position as the Haldanes and withdrew to ally themselves with the Old Scotch Baptists.

Harry Escott, op cit, especially, Chapters VI, VII, and VIII, pp 45-85.

Percival Waugh, 'The Converging Streams', George Yuille, History of the Baptists in Scotland from Pre-Reformation Times, Baptist Union of Scotland, Glasgow, 1926, pp 51-65.

For

The Declaratory Act of the General Assembly of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland Respecting Unqualified Ministers (1799)

Report Concerning Vagrant Teachers and Sunday Schools  
(1799)

The Pastoral Admonition (1799)

See: Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1638-1842, Church Law Society, Edinburgh, 1842, pp 868-874.

91. Escott, op cit, p 313.

See also: MacArthur, op cit, pp 204-208.

92. Escott, op cit, p 314.

Yuille, op cit, p 214.

93. Royal Commission on Religious Instruction

Eighth Report of the Commissioners, 1838

Parliamentary Papers, 1838, Volume XXVI, p 144.

94. Ibid, p 144.

95. Ibid, p 145.

Acts 20, probably esp. vs 20

"And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you and have taught you publicly and from house to house."

[supporting itinerancy]

and vss 33-34.

"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities..."

96. For the background to, and nature of the early Evangelical Movement in Britain:

D W Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from 1730-1980, Unwin Hyman, London, 1989, esp. Chapters 1, 2 and 3, pp 1-104.

Drummond and Bulloch, op cit, esp. Chapter 3, pp 45-63 and Chapters 8, 9 and 10, pp 161-219.

Stewart J Brown, Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth, Oxford University press, 1982, esp. Chapters 1 and 2, pp 1-90.

97. Drummond and Bulloch, op cit, p 184.
98. Callum Brown, 'Religion and Social Change', in T M Devine and Rosalind Mitchinson, op cit, p 145.
99. Ibid, p 145.
100. RPH 26 January 1790, p 117.
101. Ibid, p 117.
102. Ibid, p 117.
103. Ibid, p 117.
104. Ibid, p 117.
105. RPH 30 March 1790, p 120.

There was not unanimity among Airdrie Established Church supporters concerning the chapel scheme. As the Presbytery minute for March 30 1790 recorded:

"Mr John Stoddard, feuar in Airdrie, in his own name, and in the name of all who should adhere to him entered his protest... and thereupon took instruments in the Clerk's hands and craved Extracts. To which protest William Russell, John Martin, James Findlay and James Waddell adhered and severally took instruments."

106. FES Volume 3, p 220.  
MacArthur, op cit, p 286.
107. RPH 26 January 1790, p 117.
108. Ibid, p 117.
109. Ibid, p 117.
110. Ibid, p 117.
111. Ibid, p 117.
112. Ibid, p 117.
113. Ibid, p 117.
114. Ibid, p 117.
115. Drummond and Bulloch, op cit, p 184-5.
116. Ibid, p 184-5.

117. Callum Brown, 'Religion and Social Change'  
in Devine and Mitchinson, op cit, p 148.

118. Drummond and Bulloch, op cit, p 185-5.

119. Ibid, p 185.

Text of the 1798 Act and Regulations Respecting the  
Erection of Chapels of Ease:

Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of  
Scotland, 1638-1842, pp 861-862.

120. FES Volume 3, p 220.

121. RPH 13 June 1798, p 250-1 (gives short account of  
events from Bower's resignation in Nov 1796 to  
appointment of next incumbent).

122. Ibid, p 250-1.

123. Ibid, p 250-1.

124. Ibid, p 250-1.

125. RPH 23 August 1798, p 257.

126. Constitution, RPH 13 June 1798, p 252.

127. Constitution, Ibid, p 253.

128. Constitution, Ibid, p 252.

129. Constitution, Ibid, p 253.

130. Constitution, Ibid, p 253.

131. Constitution, Ibid, p 253.

132. Constitution, Ibid, p 252.

133. Constitution, Ibid, p 253.

134. Constitution, Ibid, p 252.

135. Constitution, Ibid, p 253.

136. Constitution, Ibid, p 253.

137. FES Volume 3, p 220.

MacArthur, op cit, p 286.

138. Glasgow Courier, 17 April 1802.

139. Antony P Cohen, The symbolic Construction of Community, Tavistock Publications, London, 1985, p 19.

for the application of Cohen's theory see:

Antony P Cohen, Whalsay: Symbol, Segment and Boundary in a Shetland Island Community, Manchester University Press, 1987.

140. Antony P Cohen, The Symbolic Construction of Community, p 12.

141. Ibid, p 12.

142. Ibid, p 12.

143. Ibid, p 12.

144. Ibid, p 13.

145. Ibid, p 14-15.

146. Ibid, p 15.

147. Ibid, p 15.

148. Ibid, p 19.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### INTO THE NEW WORLD: INDUSTRIALISATION AND ITS IMPACT ON COMMUNITY AND CULTURE AT AIRDRIE

#### The Crucible Years - Change and Continuity

"Airdrie's turned a big place now"

Thus in 1829 mused "Timothy Squint", weaver, in a choice passage from his Life.<sup>1</sup> In his reflections Squint contrasted Airdrie's weaving identity with changes that he saw going on all around him. Jupiter-like, he pondered on past, present and future, and was optimistic about the prospects for Airdrie in a dawning New Age. Squint draws our attention to the immediate, visible quality of change at Airdrie in the late 1820s. More buildings and above all more people.

Population increase was one aspect of the transformation of the town by the combination of developments called "industrialisation".<sup>2</sup> Another was the supplanting of hand loom weaving as the staple of the local economy by coal and ironstone mining and, later, by engineering. The separation of Airdrie from New Monkland became more pronounced so that by the last quarter of the nineteenth

century there could be no disputing the political and commercial domination of the parish by Airdrie town.

It should be noted, however, that the community identity of weaving-commercial Airdrie which had been developing since the late eighteenth century itself came under a series of assaults as people from outside the burgh and New Monkland parish flooded in, as the town's economic base altered, and as its physical environment changed. This is not to say that industrialisation was cataclysmic. It was the scale and rapidity rather than the fact of change that was new. Indeed, a degree of anticipation of likely future developments in Airdrie was expressed in such movements as that which resulted in the Burgh Act of 1821. The formation of organised local government in the shape of a town's council was an exercise in political consolidation, a manifestation of local patriotism and an attempt to plan ahead.

Weaving retained economic importance until well into the 1830s while politically it was a key component in the radical reform and trades union movements of the 1830s and '40s. More importantly, culturally and symbolically Airdrie's weaving inheritance played a crucial role in serving as a brake on potentially destructive, runaway change for it provided a framework against which change could be measured and onto which an emerging industrial

culture could be grafted. For Airdrie, the 1830s and '40s were the critical decades of the nineteenth century.

#### Population Change in New Monkland and at Airdrie.

From 1801 a Census of people in Britain was taken every ten years. The statistical information that the censuses provide has been described as giving "a national snapshot at a particular moment in time."<sup>3</sup> Likewise, by extracting the relevant statistical material on the population of Airdrie and on the occupations of the people it is possible to obtain and compare local "snapshots" at particular moments in time.

Historians are deeply divided in their opinions on the use to which Census data can be put.<sup>4</sup> For our purposes the Census material used in this and subsequent chapters is intended to convey no more than an impression of changes in the population and its structure at Airdrie.

The Census of 1821 estimated the population of New Monkland parish to be 7,362 of which 4,860 lived in Airdrie town leaving 2,502 in the landward part of the parish.<sup>5</sup> Throughout the next decade Airdrie's population increased relatively faster than that of the landward parish, as it had done during the years 1801-1821.<sup>6</sup> The fact that Airdrie's population was now far greater than the landward

parish marked the further separation of town from country and contrasted with the situation in 1793 when Mack noted an almost even distribution between Airdrie and the surrounding countryside.

By 1831 New Monkland as a whole contained some 9,867 people. Airdrie now accounted for 6,594 while numbers in the landward parish rose to 3,272.<sup>7</sup> In the course of the next decade the landward population increased at a relatively greater rate than that of Airdrie.<sup>8</sup> Between 1831 and 1841 the population of both town and landward parish exhibited a startling rise. The 1841 Census estimated that New Monkland parish as a whole contained 20,511 inhabitants (an increase of 10,644 since 1831). Airdrie had swollen to 12,418 and the remaining eight thousands dwelt in the landward parish but concentrated in a rash of small coal mining villages which sprang up mostly in the vicinity of Airdrie.<sup>9</sup>

Following the expansion of 1831-1841 Airdrie's growth rate slowed considerably, the 1851 Census returns showing the burgh's population standing at 14,435.<sup>10</sup> Even this figure, however, was an overestimate for it included the villages of Arden and Ballochney which were really part of the landward parish and not Airdrie burgh.<sup>11</sup>

During the next ten years to 1861 Airdrie's population actually fell to 12,922.<sup>12</sup> From this date population rose fairly modestly during successive decades.<sup>13</sup>

If weight of numbers can be considered as a pressure on community at Airdrie then clearly the period between 1821 and 1851 stands out and within this thirty year span the decade between 1831 and 1841 was of critical importance. However, caution is required when drawing conclusions about influx of population and its impact on community at Airdrie for two reasons: first, because the mass of outsiders was contained within the burgh boundaries and concentrated around the established streets and highways of the town; and second, because while large numbers of outsiders coming in certainly placed a strain on existing institutions and agencies, these did not remain inert but in fact initiated changes which embraced outsiders permitting them to identify with and become part of Airdrie's culture and inheritance.

#### The Changing Base of the Local Economy

"Go to Airdrie where there is a heap o' pits"<sup>14</sup>

##### (i) The Course of Industrial Development

The Census enumerators for New Monkland parish and Airdrie town were in no doubt as to the causes of the increases in

the region's population. In the 1831 Census the rise from 1821-1831 was attributed to the opening up of the parish by a new Carlisle road running north-south through the parish and passing across the eastern extremities of Airdrie burgh, and also by the Ballochney railway running east-west through the parish and adjacent to the northern boundaries of Airdrie burgh.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, in taking note of quarrymen, ironstone miners, coal hewers and railwaymen in New Monkland and Airdrie, the 1831 enumerators pointed to a growing importance of heavy industry in the local economy.<sup>16</sup>

Rev James Begg in his New Statistical Account of New Monkland Parish (1835) drew on the statistics of the 1831 Census but expanded on the enumerators viewpoint. Commenting on the progressive increase in the population of the whole parish since 1801 he stated that it was the result of "the coal works in the parish, and the ironworks in the vicinity, having been greatly extended...."<sup>17</sup> But he also indicated the continuing importance of weaving pointing out that population rises since 1801 were partly the result of "the weavers of cotton cloth for the Glasgow manufacturers having greatly multiplied."<sup>18</sup> Moreover, he was emphatic that the bulk of weavers and of men engaged in coal and ironstone mining were located in Airdrie.<sup>19</sup>

The census enumerators of 1841 were no more specific than those of 1831 in drawing attention to the especial importance for New Monkland and Airdrie of "the success of

manufacturing and of the coal and iron trade."<sup>20</sup> But by 1851 the industrialisation of the parish and burgh had become a fact so well known that the enumerators did not bother to mention it at all.

The Carlisle road to which both the 1831 Census and James Begg referred had in fact been operational since 1825.<sup>21</sup> Although it was never to prove as important for Airdrie's economic development as the Glasgow-Edinburgh via Bathgate turnpike of 1793, the new road quickly attained symbolic importance as marking the eastern limits of Airdrie town proper. Any economic benefits which accrued to the parish generally on the opening of the Carlisle road were quickly overshadowed by those derived from railways.<sup>22</sup>

From the mid-1820s a network of railways sprang up around Airdrie to serve the needs of the fast expanding coal and iron industries. Eventually, in 1846, a line was brought into the heart of the town, which thereby acquired its first station situated in Hallcraig Street.

By 1865 it was possible to travel from Airdrie to Edinburgh via Bathgate, and from Airdrie to Glasgow Queen Street Station. A new Airdrie (South) station, sited in the town's Broomknoll Street, now superseded Hallcraig Street Station as the main departure point for trains to Glasgow.<sup>23</sup> Between the bare bones of the main lines there was a network of smaller lines running from coal and ironstone



mines to main routes. In and around Airdrie the land became dotted with the sheds, signals, signal boxes, small workshops and other paraphernalia connected with the needs of railways. Economically the railways linked Airdrie with the larger centres of Glasgow and Edinburgh which could now be reached quicker than ever before and Airdrie thus became more fully integrated into the national economy.

Yet at the same time railways helped to define the status and separateness of Airdrie. Hallcraig and South Stations not only served as gateways to the wider world and penetrated the town from the outside, they also reinforced the idea of Airdrie's worth and importance. Stations emphasised the sense of belonging to a particular place. Literally and symbolically they were points of departure and, just as significantly, they represented "coming home". Most important of all, from the late 1820s railway workers settled in Airdrie to become, along with workers in other heavy industries, the living embodiments of a changing economic base.

The development of the railways in and around New Monkland parish was part stimulus and part response to the expansion of the coal and ironstone mining of the region. This in turn was related to developments in the West of Scotland iron industry which proved to be of enormous benefit to the coal and iron masters in both Old and New Monkland parishes.<sup>24</sup> The Bairds of Gartsherrie in Old Monkland were

among the first to apply the hot-blast technique and their ironworks on the banks of the Monkland Canal, near the Sheepford Locks, quickly expanded.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, by 1840 the Bairds alone controlled the largest single share of Lanarkshire blackband ironstone fields.<sup>26</sup> Other local ironmasters followed their lead giving rise to a host of new ironworks and townships centred around the village of Coatbridge in Old Monkland.

"By 1848, 6 of Lanarkshire's 15 ironworks, and 39 out of the 57 active blast furnaces were grouped around ... Coatbridge."<sup>27</sup>

These works used up huge quantities of coal and ironstone mined close-by or brought in from New Monkland parish and Airdrie.

New Monkland parish never had any ironworks producing pig-iron and its principal contribution to the industrialisation of Lanarkshire was as a major supplier of coal and ironstone for use in the furnaces of Old Monkland and Coatbridge. There were fortunes to be made. By 1842, for example, three ironworks in Coatbridge (Gartsherrie, Summerlee, Dundyvan) and one in Old Monkland (Calder) were receiving massive quantities of coal from Sir William Alexander's Rochsolloch estate in and around Airdrie, yielding him an annual income of some £12,600.<sup>28</sup> The enormous expansion in the iron industry increased the demand for coal to such an extent that the ironmasters

quickly discovered that it was in their own best interests to gain control of coal fields so as to mine coal for use in their own works. A high proportion of coal and ironstone mines around Coatbridge were taken over by ironmasters. The pattern of colliery ownership at Airdrie, however, was different. There, coalmasters owned more collieries than did ironmasters a factor that greatly affected the way in which Airdrie developed.<sup>29</sup>

Between the 1830s and 1860s the landscape in and around Airdrie underwent dramatic transformation as the workings of coal and ironstone mines proliferated, scarring the land. Winding gear and, after 1840, engine sheds punctuated the skyline. Bings changed the contours of the countryside. Miners' rows sprang up in the town and in the surrounding coal mining villages.<sup>30</sup> In the years before 1840 pits were usually either open-cast or shallow and were quickly worked out. The development of high pressure steam-engines after 1840 permitted deeper mining but, even then, many mines had a short lifespan.<sup>31</sup> Consequently, the coal and ironstone industries of New Monkland and Airdrie, as elsewhere, required a constant and highly mobile labour force. Writing in the first quarter of the twentieth century James Knox commented "There is not a quarter in or near the Town where a pit shaft was not sunk."<sup>32</sup>

The decline and eventual disappearance of weaving at Airdrie had little impact on the success, power and

influence of merchants, shopkeepers and skilled artisans. Population expansion resulting from industrialisation amply compensated for the loss of weaving and weavers' purchasing power. Indeed in this sense, the chief beneficiary of industrialisation in the locality was Airdrie's commercial sector.<sup>33</sup> Airdrie never became a single industry town. On the contrary, it was economically diverse and a key commercial, service and supply town for the extensive New Monkland hinterland.

(ii) People: Occupational Status 1821 - 1861

Information relating to the occupational status of the people of Britain has been part of the censuses since 1801<sup>34</sup> but its use is highly problematical not least because methods of classifying occupations changed considerably between 1801 and 1931.<sup>35</sup> The occupational aspect of Census data has attained great notoriety among historians not only because of imperfections in the statistics but also because of the complications that can arise when information limited to occupational status is used to draw direct conclusions about social class. Social class

"is based on a variety of criteria of which occupation is but one. Access to economic power and the level of economic reward are important aspects of class but the meaning of class is grounded also in values, expectations, beliefs and experiences of a social group. This must be borne in mind when one turns to the impersonal categories employed in the Census reports."<sup>36</sup>

The problematical nature of Census data on occupational status is made all the more acute because the Census compilers themselves tended to make direct links between occupation and social class.

Nevertheless, the occupational information can provide a pointer towards understanding class which is, after all, defined primarily by economic function. And assuming a loose three class model for the nineteenth century - upper, middle and working class - the Census data also illustrates the need to be aware of the ambiguous, fluid and heterogenous character of class.<sup>37</sup>

In the 1801 Census an attempt was made to classify the occupations of the people using three broad categories or "classes": those employed "in agriculture"; those employed "in trade, handicrafts or manufactures", and those "not in either of the preceding two categories".<sup>38</sup> The returns in this enquiry proved unsatisfactory<sup>39</sup> and the 1811 Census resorted instead to a classification of families rather than individuals, but using the same broad categories of 1801.<sup>40</sup> This form of questioning was repeated in 1821 and in that year the returns from New Monkland parish as a whole (that is, including Airdrie) gave 333 families chiefly employed in Agriculture, 1,145 families chiefly employed in Trade, Manufactures or Handicrafts, and 64 other families not in either of the first two categories.<sup>41</sup>

Bearing in mind that 4,860 people of New Monkland's total population of 7,362 at this date lived in Airdrie, we can reasonably surmise that of the families grouped under the second category, most were located in the burgh rather than in the landward parish.

For the 1831 Census the occupational enquiry began with a classification of families for New Monkland as a whole, as in 1821. The number of families in Agriculture had risen to 344, in Trade, Manufactures and Handicrafts to 1,550, and in neither of these two categories to 135.<sup>42</sup> In tabular form the change from 1821 to 1831 can be represented as in Table 1.

Table 1 suggests that the number of families directly employed in the Agriculture category was growing at a slower rate than the number of families in either of the other two classifications so it would appear that by 1831 agriculture was becoming less important than other sectors in the New Monkland parish economy. However, we cannot assume that heavy industry lay behind the expansion in non-agricultural categories down to 1831 for at this time such expansion could still be attributed to hand loom weaving.

Table 1

Occupational Status of Families in New Monkland Parish

Occupational Categories	Census Year	No. of Families	% change (as expressed as % of maximum)
Chiefly employed in agriculture	1821	333	3.19% less families in agriculture in 1821 than in 1831
	1831	344	
Chiefly employed in Trade, Manufactures or Handicrafts	1821	1,145	26.12% less families in Trade, Manufactures or Handicrafts in 1821 than in 1831
	1831	1,550	
Others in neither of preceding categories	1821	64	52.59% less families in neither of preceding in 1821 than in 1831
	1831	135	



There is little else in the occupational data of the 1821 Census that can be directly compared with 1831. But additional information relating to occupations in New Monkland and Airdrie appeared in the 1831 Census which did not feature at all in 1821. This extra evidence can help us to understand the movement in, and trend of the economic base of the local economy.

The scope of the 1831 Census enquiry on occupations was extended beyond families to include statistics on the occupations of males aged twenty years and over, arranged under seven broad headings and presented in tabular form. These returns indicate that by 1831 Airdrie was the manufacturing and retailing heartland of New Monkland parish.<sup>43</sup>

Furthermore, important pieces of information on male occupations in New Monkland parish and in Airdrie burgh were supplied in footnotes to the main data of the 1831 Census.

The enumerators stated that there were 680 weavers (males aged twenty and above) engaged in cotton manufacture in New Monkland parish. Unfortunately, they did not divide this figure between Airdrie and landward parish.

In addition they noted that of labourers not agricultural  
58..... were quarrymen  
168..... were ironstone miners  
223..... were coal hewers  
41..... were employed on the railways.<sup>44</sup>

This gives a total number of male labourers, twenty and above, directly involved in what may loosely be termed "heavy industry" of 490.

Now, in the footnotes to the occupational data on labourers in the parishes of Kilbride and Old Monkland the enumerators stated that those employed in quarries, coal and ironstone pits, and in ironworks had their families entered in the second column of the initial classification of occupations by family.<sup>45</sup> If we apply the same principle to New Monkland parish then we can reasonably conclude that the rise in the second category of families (families chiefly employed in trade, manufactures and handicrafts) from 1821 to 1831 was to be explained at least as much by industrial labour as by weaving.<sup>46</sup>

The trends which are apparent in the 1831 Census occupational data continued over succeeding decades and the 1861 Census shows beyond all doubt that Airdrie had become dominated by the new heavy industries, particularly coal mining. By this date a new and more complex classification

of occupations had been developed by the Census Commissioners. For the 1841 Census a householder's schedule was introduced in which the occupation of every person, except wives living with their husbands, and sons or daughters with their parents and not receiving wages, was required to be stated.<sup>47</sup> It was hoped thus to obtain an exact statement of individual occupations. In the 1851 Census a new classification was used in which the various occupations were distributed under "Classes" and "Sub-Classes", or as they were renamed at later censuses "Orders" and "Sub-Orders".<sup>48</sup>

The 1851 classification was revised in 1861 and a book of instructions was issued to the clerks employed in classifying the occupations of the people. This book contained lists of occupational orders - now numbering eighteen - and sub-orders. The orders were grouped under six broad classes namely, (1) Professional, (2) Domestic, (3) Commercial, (4) Agricultural, (5) Industrial, (6) Indefinite and Non-Productive.<sup>49</sup>

At Airdrie, population now 12,922, most people were returned under two classes: (2) the domestic class, and (5) the industrial class. Within the latter class the biggest single male occupational group in Airdrie was that of miners.<sup>50</sup>

## Setting the Agenda

If we follow T C Smout's lead in describing Airdrie of the 1830s and '40s as a "frontier town"<sup>51</sup> we should also be careful to acknowledge the importance of continuities in community and culture there. Airdrie's distinctiveness, far from being obliterated by the rise of a capitalist-industrial economy, was in fact reasserted because of the transformations that industrialisation wrought.

From the 1830s coal and iron mining, and related trades in both parish and town underwent rapid expansion transforming not just the economic base of the locality but also its physical environment. The parish economy by the 1860s to all intents and purposes meant the Airdrie economy. By this date the town was locked into Scotland's industrial economy. Local people's fortunes were now dependent on industries which often had their real centres of power elsewhere. Coal mining, ironworks inside and outside the town, and later engineering occupied greater numbers of men than weaving had done. But this did not mean that Airdrie was an industrial town in the same sense as, for example, Coatbridge. Indeed, the range of occupations evident in Airdrie by the time of the 1861 Census suggests that the label "industrial town" obscures as much as it reveals.

Furthermore, it is not at all clear that a rigorous class analysis can illuminate the many shades of grey in between

the black and white extremities of superwealth and abject poverty that undoubtedly existed in Airdrie. Social class was important - contemporaries acknowledged this - but it is difficult to be clear about what social class really meant. Nevertheless, it is well-nigh impossible to write accurately about Airdrie in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries without at least some reference to class. Unlike at Coatbridge, as we shall see, the gulf between rich and poor in Airdrie during the early nineteenth century was bridged by a strong, vocal and long-established middle class, lower middle class/artisan continuum with its power based on merchanting, shopkeeping and professions. With the decline of weaving the town's commercial middle class and artisans increasingly depended on the new industrial economic base; these groups expanded to serve the rising population that industrialisation stimulated. However, the strength of the commercial sector of the Airdrie economy had a history that ante-dated the town's newly acquired industrial status for it had been founded on weaving so the expansion of commercial Airdrie was an extension of the process that had been on going since the late eighteenth century. This continuity softened the effects of industrialisation at Airdrie for two important reasons.

First, it gave some coherence to abrupt changes that might otherwise have been wholly discontinuous. Second, and intimately related to the first, many of the merchants, shopkeepers and skilled artisans of the post-1820 decades

were members of merchant, shopkeeping or artisan families that had prospered in weaving Airdrie. This group served as a repository of local traditions and symbols of Airdrie as a weaving community. Shopkeepers in particular were a crucial grouping in this respect for they had a high level of day to day contact with the general populace, including newcomers. Together the commercial middle class and skilled artisans were key groups in the survival and consolidation of community in the years of rapid population expansion and industrialisation. Although the bulk of people in these groups were less likely to command the huge fortunes and resources that landowners-cum-industrialists or coal mine owners could, they nevertheless acted as a counterweight - not always successfully - to the latter people's unbridled use of wealth, power and influence. It is notable that of the one hundred and twenty-six men who held office as Airdrie town councillors from 1821-1869, merchants, shopkeepers and skilled artisans far outnumbered super-rich industrialists/landowner-industrialists.<sup>52</sup> Through municipal government too, the traditions and symbols of an older Airdrie were mediated to the new. Consequently, Airdrie's sense of place and distinctiveness was strengthened not weakened by industrialisation. The idea of community was reinvigorated and the reality of community was maintained, and this was partly because elements of continuity were flexible and mitigated the potentially destructive effects of industrialisation. In a sense, the pace and scale of change made a distinctive

Airdrie more necessary than ever before, and certainly by the last quarter of the nineteenth century community was as potent an idea as it had been in the period prior to 1830. Moreover, the concept of community was not primarily a construct of mid-Victorian bourgeois ideology and complacency or of invented tradition. Even though it was often the local middle class who expressed themselves in terms of community and articulated the idea by promoting it in public policy and in print, community was not always or only a paternalistic concept. It did not necessarily foster integration of different groups and social classes. Furthermore, as we shall see, the concept of community in New World Airdrie owed as much to religion and religious conflict as it did to socio-economic relationships.

If we are to come to terms with late nineteenth century Airdrie it is essential that we have some idea of the impact of industrialisation on the town during the 1830s and 1840s because the problems, and solutions to problems, that emerged during these decades set the agenda down to the First World War and beyond.

The generation of men and women of all social classes who created what has been called the "mid-Victorian Environment"<sup>53</sup> emerged from out of the crucible-like 1830s and '40s. In turn, it was in this mid-Victorian environment that late century churchmen, Socialists and



ILPers were raised and nurtured. The years between the Great Exhibition and the Great Depression came to be seen by many people, especially among the bourgeoisie, as an "Age of Equipoise" bounded on one side by the turbulent 1830s and '40s, and on the other by renewed economic crisis, further industrial transformation and a more volatile political atmosphere.<sup>54</sup> Yet such a view of the mid-century decades was only ever at best a half truth. In the 'fifties and 'sixties the legacy of the years after 1830 was never very far beneath the surface. This was a legacy of unresolved or partially resolved problems, such as urban poverty or public sanitation, which had been disguised by the material prosperity and economic supremacy of Britain. When after 1870 churchmen, philanthropists and Labour leaders (among others) sought to develop "new" critiques of industrial society because prosperity had not cured all ills, their battles against poverty and deprivation were contiguous with struggles that had begun between 1830 and 1850. Critiques of late nineteenth century industrial society and attempts to solve its problems were part of a tradition which the 1830s and '40s had framed.

For the Scottish Presbyterian and other churches the 'thirties and 'forties moulded thinking and responses down to 1914. The concept and sense of mission was given definitive shape during these years, and it was this sense of mission that the ILP in Scotland was to pick-up, indeed

claim as its inheritance. It was this sense of mission, derived from the early as much as the late nineteenth century, that the ILPers cultivated and explored in their drive for political, cultural and spiritual domination of the working classes and Labour movements of the 1890s and early 1900s. Socialist Revivalism in late nineteenth century Scotland had its origins not so much in the post-1870 period as in the 1830s and '40s.

### Notes

1. Timothy Squint was the pseudonym of one R McCulloch who contributed a number of short pieces to William Miller's Airdrie Literary Album or Weekly Repository of Original and Select Material under the heading 'Choice Passages in the Life of Timothy Squint, Weaver, North Loan.'

For further information on William Miller and the Airdrie Literary Album venture see Chapter 6 following.

The opening quotation from Timothy Squint is from the Album No.17, Saturday, March 28, 1829, p 61.

2. For background on industrialisation and its impact in Scotland during the 1830s and '40s:

T C Smout, A Century of the Scottish People. 1830-1950, Collins, Glasgow, 1986.

Laurance J Saunders, Scottish Democracy 1815-1840: the Social and Intellectual Background, Oliver and Boyd, Edinburgh, 1950.

3. Guide to Census Reports, Great Britain 1801-1966, HMSO, London, 1977, p 111.

4. See, for example, Edward Royle, Modern Britain, A Social History, 1750 - 1985, Edward Arnold, London, 1987.

Chapter 2, 'People', pp 40-79.

Chapter 3, 'Class', pp 80-155.

5. Census 1821. Population Abstracts: England, Wales and Scotland.

Parliamentary Papers XV, 1822, p 519.

For the 1821 Census, Airdrie was not returned separately in the main tables but its population was given in a footnote. From 1831, Airdrie was returned separately. All data for New Monkland parish was usually split into two columns: one for statistics relating to Airdrie and another for statistics relating to the landward parish.

6. George Thomson, 'Airdrie and the Parish of New Monkland'. The Third Statistical Account of Scotland, vol VIII, 'The County of Lanark', Collins, Glasgow, 1960, p 158.

Table 1, 'Population Statistics for New Monkland Parish and Burgh of Airdrie, 1801-1951'.

7. Census 1831, Population of Britain, Parliamentary Papers, XXXVII, 1833, p 998.
8. George Thomson, op cit, p 158.
9. Census, 1841, Abstract of Answers and Returns, Parliamentary Papers, XXIII(2), 1843, p 47.
10. Census, 1851, Population, Parliamentary Papers, Volume 86, 1852-53, p 24
11. Ibid, p 25, ff "d".
12. Census, 1861, Parliamentary Papers.
13. George Thomson, op cit, p 158.
14. Evidence given to Thomas Tancred. Children's Employment Commission, Report on the Employment of Children and Young Persons in Collieries and Ironworks in the West of Scotland, Parliamentary Papers, Volume XVI, 1842, p 366.  
  
"Go to Airdrie..." was the advice given to one Johnny Miller aged 10, a homeless orphan in Glasgow's Briggate.
15. Census, 1831, Abstracts of Answers and Returns, Parliamentary Papers, Vol XXXVII, 1833, p 998.
16. Ibid, p 998.
17. James Begg, 'New Statistical Account of New Monkland Parish, 1835' in: New Statistical Account of Scotland, William Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1841, p 245.
18. Ibid, p 245.
19. Ibid, p 245.
20. Census, 1841, Parliamentary Papers, 23(2), 1843, p 47.
21. George Thomson, op cit, p 164.
22. Ballochney railway was opened in August 1828. It had been preceded by the Monkland and Kirkintilloch railway which was fully operational from October 1826. Both these early lines were developed to move coal to canals where it was then shipped east and more especially west. The Monkland and Kirkintilloch railway, running a mile to the south of Airdrie near the Monkland Canal linked collieries at Palacecraig with the Forth and Clyde Canal at Kirkintilloch.

Ballochney railway linked collieries at the villages of Ballochney, Whiterigg and Clarkston - all in the vicinity of Airdrie - with the Monkland and Kirkintilloch and the Forth and Clyde Canals. An extension of the Ballochney line to the village of Slamannan in 1840 permitted the exploitation of coal fields in the eastern parts of New Monkland parish. Indeed "widespread mining operations served by the railway and its branches led to the building of villages inhabited almost exclusively by miners." Dating from June 1831, the Garnkirk-Glasgow railway joined the Monkland and Kirkintilloch at Gartsherrie in Old Monkland parish. This meant that for the first time it was possible to transport or travel from New Monkland parish to Glasgow by rail for a small station on the Ballochney line had been opened at Leaend, just on the north-western edge of the Airdrie boundary.

The Slamannan railway extended the Ballochney line to a point on the Union Canal from where one could travel by canal-boat to Edinburgh. By 1851 this line had in turn been extended to Bo'ness thus providing a direct connection between New Monkland parish and the river Forth. It was a branch of this railway that was brought into Airdrie in 1846.

During the late 1840s, the '50s and '60s the network of local and regional lines fell prey to amalgamation fever which gripped the railway industry generally. In 1848 the Monkland and Kirkintilloch, the Ballochney and the Slamannan railways became the Monklands Railways. This company in turn merged with the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway in 1856 and with the Edinburgh and Glasgow it then passed to the North British Railways late in the same year.

See George Thomson, op cit, pp 165-166.

23. George Thomson, op cit, p 166.
24. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the Scottish iron industry grew only slowly for it was expensive and inefficient. The invention and application of Neilsen's hot-blast process after 1830, however, revolutionised Scottish iron production. It cut the amount of coal needed to produce each ton of iron and was the impetus behind the exploitation of vast untapped seams of Lanarkshire's blackband ironstone.

For a general resumé of the development of the Scottish iron industry as it affected Lanarkshire:

Alan B Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners: A Social History of their Trade Unions, 1775-1847, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1979.

esp. Part Two, 'Honourable Men and Degraded Slaves', Section 4: 'The Lanarkshire Coalfield, 1830-1875 - An Overview', pp 93-116.

25. Alan B Campbell, op cit, Part Two, Section 4, pp 93-116 and Section 5 'Coatbridge and Larkhall: A Comparative Portrait', pp 117-144.

26. Ibid, p 94.

27. Ibid, p 94.

28. Thomas Tancred, Children's Employment Commission, PP Volume XVI, 1842, p 311-12 and p 364.

also: James Knox, Airdrie: A Historical Sketch, Baird and Hamilton, Airdrie, 1921. p 76.

Coal and ironstone on the Rochsolloch Estate was extracted by a combine of ironmasters managed by Alexander Christie of Calder, William Baird of Gartsherrie, John Wilson of Dundyvan and Walter Neilson of Summerlee.

29. Gordon M Wilson, 'The Strike Policy of the West of Scotland Miners, 1842-74'. in: Ian MacDougall, Essays in Scottish Labour History, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1978, p 43.

30. There are no reliable figures of coal and ironstone pits before 1854 but in reply to questioning from the Poor Law Commissioners in 1843, Rev James Begg estimated that there were some forty coal, and ninety ironstone pits in New Monkland Parish.

Gordon M Wilson, Alexander MacDonald, p 20.

Gordon M Wilson, 'The Strike Policy of the West of Scotland Miners', in: MacDougall, Essays in Scottish Labour History, pp 30-32.

Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland), Appendix to Report, p 22, 1844, p 158.

31. Thomas Tancred noted that in 1841-2 high pressure steam engines were in use in the Airdrie district collieries and in those to the east of Glasgow.

32. Knox, op cit, p 76.

33. As a comparison of the numbers of merchants, shopkeepers and tradesmen listed in Pigot's New

Commercial Directory (1825-6) and Pigot's National Directory (1837) reveals, there was not only a multiplication of shops and suppliers in Airdrie but also a remarkable survival rate among family businesses operating over the decade. To take just one example, in 1826 Pigot's listed nine bakers - four of whom were also spiritdealers - in Airdrie. By 1837 Pigot's advertised seventeen bakers of whom at least five appear to have been trading back in 1826.

Pigot and Company's New Commercial Directory of Scotland for 1825-26, J Pigot, London, 1826.

Airdrie Entry: pp 453-455.

Pigot and Company's National Commercial Directory of the Whole of Scotland, J Pigot, London, 1837.

Airdrie Entry: pp 524-526.

34. For background to the structure and compilation of the decennial censuses the essential work of reference is,

Guide to the Census Reports, Great Britain 1801-1966, HMSO, London, 1977.

35. Ibid,

Part 2, 'Significant Developments in the Scope and Organisation of the Census', pp 11-25.

Part 4, 'Selected Subjects of Census Enquiry', pp 47-54.

36. Edward Royle, Modern Britain: A Social History, 1750-1985, Edward Arnold, London, 1987, pp 86-7.

37. Important discussions of Class in

Edward Royle, op cit, Chapter 3, 'Class', pp 80-155.

Geoffrey Best, (for the Victorians continual and confused use of the language of class),

Mid-Victorian Britain 1851-75, Fontana, London, 1979, pp 15-16.

D G Wright, Popular Radicalism: The Working Class Experience 1780-1880, Longman, London, 1988. Introduction, 'Class and Class Consciousness', pp 1-22.

John Benson, The Working Class in Britain 1850-1939, Longman, London, 1989. Introduction, pp 1-6 and



Part 3: 'Responses', Section 6: 'Individual, Nation, Class' pp 139-173.

For Class in Victorian Scotland:

R H Campbell, 'The Landed Classes' in T M Devine and Rosalind Mitchison, People and Society in Scotland, Volume 1, 1760-1830, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1988, pp 91-108.

Stana Nenadic, 'The Rise of the Urban Middle Class', in Devine and Mitchison, op cit, pp 109-126. Nenadic uses the loose threefold division.

38. Guide to Census Reports, p 47.
39. Ibid, p 47.
40. Ibid, p 47.
41. 1821 Census, Parliamentary Papers, XV, 1822, p 519.
42. 1831 Census, Parliamentary Papers, XXXVII, 1833, p 998.
43. The returns for New Monkland parish, as with the population figures, were made separately for Airdrie and for the landward parish. Using this data I have drawn up Table 2 and Tables 2a-2g. Totals for New Monkland as a whole are calculated using straightforward addition: Airdrie plus landward parish.

From the returns on occupational status of males aged twenty years and above as presented in Table 2 and then in Tables 2a-2g a number of broad conclusions about the economic base of the parish economy and changes occurring in it can be postulated.

#### New Monkland Parish

In New Monkland parish as a whole the 1831 Census returns on the occupational status of males, twenty years and above, suggest that the balance in the local economy was now weighted heavily towards the non-agricultural sectors. Manufacturing and manufacturing machinery, the retail trade and handicrafts, and non-agricultural labour accounting for far more men than agricultural categories. The former categories together represent 73.2% of the total number of males returned under the terms of the occupational enquiry (Table 2a).

#### The Landward Parish

Only in the landward parish was agriculture still the dominant feature of the economy at this point in time.

Even here, however, the non-agricultural sectors appear to have been growing rapidly in importance, a conclusion borne out by the statistics for agricultural labourers and non-agricultural labourers each of which accounts for 22.9% of males in the landward parish (Table 2b). Of all males returned for the whole parish, the landward part accounts for 33.7% and in every category except those agricultural a smaller proportion of landward males was employed than at Airdrie.

#### Airdrie

The Census returns on occupational status for 1831 indicate beyond all doubt the separate and distinctive character of Airdrie within New Monkland parish. 66.3% of all "occupied" males, twenty years and above, were located at Airdrie and in every category (except those agricultural) the proportion of Airdrie males employed was greater than in the landward parish. The predominance of manufacturing, making manufacturing machinery, the retail trade, handicrafts and non-agricultural labour in the parish as a whole was almost entirely the result of the rise of Airdrie. Agricultural interests in the landward parish remained powerful in the parish as a whole but the indications are that these could not long hold out against the rising influence of the non-agricultural sectors of the parish economy. Certainly at 36.3%, Airdrie agricultural labourers were a relatively high proportion of agricultural labourers in the whole parish (Table 2g) but they were nevertheless a mere 6.7% of occupied men at Airdrie (Table 2c) and only 4.4% of all the men in New Monkland parish (Table 2e).

Manufacturing and making manufacturing machinery, the retail trade and handicrafts, and non-agricultural labour employed more men at Airdrie than any of the other categories. We should notice too the high proportion of capitalists, bankers and professional men at Airdrie; 1.8% of all males in New Monkland parish returned under the terms of the occupational enquiry (Table 2e). Of all the capitalists and bankers returned for the parish as a whole 74.6% were located at Airdrie (Table 2g) and it seems likely that they would have been heavily committed in manufacturing, making manufacturing machinery, retailing handicrafts and non-agricultural sectors of the parish economy.

Airdrie accommodated 83.4% of all those returned under manufacturing and making manufacturing machinery, 78.1% of all those in retail and handicrafts, and 68.2% of male non-agricultural labour (Table 2g).

Table 2 - Occupational Status of Males, 20 Years and above, in New Monkland and Airdrie, 1831

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
	AGRICULTURE			Employed in manufactures or in making machinery			Employed in retail trade or in handicrafts as makers or workmen	

Table 2a - Total Number of Males in Each Column as % of Total Number of Males

1	2	3	4	5	6	7			
NEW MONKLAND PARISH (LANDWARD AND ARTDRIE)	AGRICULTURE			Capitalists, Bankers, Professionals and other educated men	Labourers employed NOT agriculture	Other males 20 years of age (except servants)	MALE SERVANTS (b) 20 years of age and above		
	Males 20 years of age and above	(a) Occupiers employing labourers	(b) Occupiers not employing labourers						
								Employed in manufactures or in making machinery	Employed in retail trade or in handicrafts as makers or workmen
2,378	2.3	4.8	12.1	29.7	19.2	2.5	24.3	4.3	0.7

Table 2b - Landward Males in Each Column as % of Total Number of Males in Landward Parish

NEW MONKLAND PARISH: LANDWARD	Males 20 years of age and above	AGRICULTURE					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	NEW MONKLAND PARISH: LANDWARD
		(a) Occupiers employing labourers	(b) Occupiers not employing labourers	(c) Labourers employed in agriculture	Employed in manufactures or in making manufacturing machinery	Employed in retail trade or in handicrafts as makers or workmen	Capitalists, Bankers, Professionals and other educated men	Labourers employed in labour NOT agriculture servants)	Other males 20 years of age (except servants)	MALE SERVANTS (a) 20 years of age and above	(b)			
	802	6.6	13.6	22.9	14.6	12.5	1.9	22.9	4.0	1.0				

Table 2c - Airdrie Males in Each Column as % of Total Number of Males in Airdrie

NEW MONKLAND PARISH: AIRDRIE	Males 20 years of age and above	1		2		3		4		5		6		7	
		AGRICULTURE		Employed in manufactures or in making machinery		Employed in retail trade or in handicrafts as makers or workmen		Capitalists, Bankers, Professionals and other educated men		Labourers employed in labour NOT agriculture		Other males 20 years of age (except servants)		MALE SERVANTS	
		(a) Occupiers employing labourers	(b) Occupiers not employing labourers	(c) Labourers employed in agriculture										(a) 20 years of age and above	(b) NEW MONKLAND PARISH: LANDWARD
	1,576	0.1	0.4	6.7	37.4	22.6	2.8	25.0	4.4	0.6					

Table 2d - Landward Males in Each Column as % of Total Males New Monkland

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Males 20 years of age and above	AGRICULTURE	Employed in manufactures or in making manufacturing machinery	Employed in retail trade or in handicrafts as makers or workmen	Capitalists, Bankers, Professionals and other educated men	Labourers employed in labour NOT agriculture	Other males 20 years of age (except servants)	MALE SERVANTS
	(a) Occupiers employing labourers	(b) Occupiers not employing labourers	(c) Labourers employed in agriculture				
NEW MONKLAND: LANDWARD	2.2	4.6	7.7	0.6	7.7	1.3	0.3
							Under 20 years of age and above
NEW MONKLAND: LANDWARD							
LANDWARD MALES ARE 33.7% OF TOTAL MALES, NEW MONKLAND AS A WHOLE	2,378						33.5





Table 2f - Landward Males in Each Column as % of Total Males in Each Column

Males 20 years of age and above	1		2	3	4	5	6	7	TOTAL MALES IN EACH COLUMN	% LANDWARD MALES
	AGRICULTURE		Employed in manufactures or in making machinery	Employed in retail trade or in handicrafts as makers or workmen	Capitalists, Bankers, Professionals and other educated men	Labourers employed in labour NOT agriculture	Other males 20 years of age (except servants)	MALE SERVANTS 20 years of age and above		
	(a) Occupiers employing labourers	(b) Occupiers not employing labourers	(c) Labourers employed in agriculture							
	55	115	289	457	59	579	101	17		
	96.3	94.8	63.7	21.9	25.4	31.8	31.7	47.0		

Table 2g - Airdrie Males in Each Column as % of Total Males in Each Column

Males 20 years of age and above	1							TOTAL MALES IN EACH COLUMN	TOTAL MALES IN EACH COLUMN	% AIRDRIE MALES
	AGRICULTURE									
	(a) Occupiers employing labourers	(b) Occupiers not employing labourers	(c) Labourers employed in agriculture	2 Employed in manufactures or in making manufacturing machinery	3 Employed in retail trade or in handicrafts as makers or workmen	4 Capitalists, Bankers, Professionals and other educated men	5 Labourers employed in labour NOT agriculture servants)			
55	115	289	706	457	59	579	101	17		
3.6	5.2	36.3	83.4	78.1	74.6	68.2	68.3	53.0		

44. Ibid, p 998 and pp 1002-3.
45. Ibid, p 998.
46. This conclusion is borne out by a more detailed examination of the figures for weavers and heavy industrial labourers in New Monkland parish.

#### Weaving and Heavy Industry

The 680 weavers returned for New Monkland as a whole in the 1831 Census were not allocated to any specific column. But it seems reasonable to assume that the weavers would be classified under columns 2 and 3 of Table 2. If the 680 accounted for all male weavers of twenty and above, then this represented 58.5% of males returned under columns 2 and 3, and 28.6% of all occupied males for the whole parish.

In any distribution of the weavers a maximum of 217 could be assigned to the landward parish and a minimum of 463 to Airdrie (Table 2). If 463 weavers were indeed located at Airdrie this would have represented 49% of Airdrie males in columns 2 and 3, and 29.4% of all occupied Airdrie males as returned under the terms of the Census.

However, James Begg in his Statistical Account of New Monkland Parish 1835 stated that in 1831 there were 669 weavers in Airdrie. Since he was drawing partly on Census figures he must either have misread the number of weavers given in the Census or, more likely, was attempting a rough distribution of the original 680 between Airdrie and the landward parish. Given Airdrie's status as a weaving town, it seems reasonable to accept this last explanation for Begg's reduced figure for weavers, and to use it instead of the maximum/minimum distribution suggested earlier. Begg's 669 Airdrie weavers would then have represented 71% of Airdrie males under columns 2 and 3, and 42% of all occupied males (twenty and over) at Airdrie specifically.

Interpreting the Census evidence on quarrymen, ironstone miners, coal hewers and railwaymen is more difficult. Each of these groups of men was assigned to the non-agricultural labour column of Table 2 but neither the individual groups nor the total of 490 men was distributed between Airdrie and the landward parish. As Table 2 shows, however, the 490 men cannot be located either solely in the landward parish or solely in Airdrie so we need to think of another way of distributing them. Again, James Begg's Statistical Account could be of some help.

Begg claimed that at Airdrie in 1831 there were 223 coal hewers and 160 ironstone miners. His reduction of the original 168 ironstone miners of the 1831 Census could, again, be a misreading of the Census or an attempt to give a more accurate distribution between Airdrie and landward parish. Assuming Begg's figures for Airdrie are more or less right this would give a total of 383 coal hewers and ironstone miners at Airdrie - 78.2% of the total 490 industrial labourers and 97% of all non-agricultural labour in Airdrie. In addition, the 383 at Airdrie would have represented 24.3% of all occupied Airdrie males (twenty and above) and 16.1% of all occupied New Monkland parish males. A simple tabulation of these figures set alongside those of the weavers helps to illustrate the main point; namely, that the 1831 Census data on occupations suggests that while weaving was holding out it was doing so against the encroachments of heavy industry, a trend especially evident in Airdrie.

669 Airdrie weavers - 42% of occupied Airdrie males  
 383 Airdrie heavy industry labourers/workers - 24.3% of occupied Airdrie males.

47. Guide to Census Reports, p 48.

48. Ibid, p 49.

"Alphabetical lists of occupations were prepared showing the Orders and Sub-Orders to which each one had been assigned. This was the first scientific attempt to classify occupations and, in spite of continual modification at later censuses and almost complete revision, the form of classification was basically the same until 1921."

49. Ibid, p 50.

50. The following data drawn from the 1861 Census, 'Occupations of the People in Scotland', p 78.

The domestic class accounted for 7,604 people, or 58.8% of the total population and the industrial class covered 4,368 people, or 33.8% of the total population. These two classes were then broken down into orders (Tables 3 and 4). If we compare the largest order in class 2, order 4, and the two largest orders in class 5, orders 11 and 15, and look at their further classification by sub-orders (Tables 5, 6 and 7), it is clear that by 1861 the biggest single male occupational group in Airdrie - after wives and children and relatives - was miners. Numbering 1,474 men, miners accounted for 11.4% of Airdrie's total

population and for 23.6% of the town's 6,242 males (including male children). Indeed, of class 5's 17 sub-orders none came close to equalling the number of miners. The largest single male occupational group in class 5 after miners was employed in cotton and flax (class 5, order 11: sub-order 3 - 249 men) and the largest single female occupational group was also in cotton and flax (class 5, order 11: sub-order 3 - 814 women).

Table 3

(2) Domestic Class - 2 Orders

Order 4: Wives, Widows,  
Children and Scholars

Order 5: In Personal  
Offices for Man

Males	Females	Males	Females
2,319	4,982	10	239

Figures from 1861 Census - Occupations of the People of  
Scotland, 1861, p 79.



Table 4

(5) Industrial Classes - 6 Orders

Order 10: In Art and Mechanic Production		Order 11: In Textile, Fabrics and Dress		Order 12: In Food and Drink		Order 13: In Animal Substances		Order 14: In Vegetable Substances		Order 15: In Minerals	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
374	6	598	1,145	327	74	18	-	36	8	1,766	16

Figures from 1861 Census - Occupations of the People of Scotland, 1861, p 80.

Table 5

(2) Domestic Class, Order 4 - 4 Sub-Orders

Sub-Order 1:		Sub-Order 2:		Sub-Order 3:		Sub-Order 4:	
Wives (not otherwise described)		Widows (not otherwise described)		Children and Relatives at home		Scholars	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
-	1,825	-	259	1,425	2,000	894	898

Figures from 1861 Census - Occupations of the People of Scotland, 1861, p 83.

Table 6

(5) Industrial Class, Order II: In Textiles, Fabric and Dress - 6 Sub-Orders

Sub-Order 1:		Sub-Order 2:		Sub-Order 3:		Sub-Order 4:		Sub-Order 5:		Sub-Order 6:	
In Wool and Worsted		In Silk		In Cotton and Flax		In Mixed Materials		In Dress		In Hemp and Other Fibrous Materials	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
15	5	2	-	249	814	61	14	271	312	-	-

Figures from 1861 Census - Occupations of the People of Scotland, 1861, pp 87-88.

Table 7

(5) Industrial Class, Order 15: In Minerals - 14 Sub-Orders

[illegible]

Figures from 1861 Census - Occupations of the People of Scotland 1861, pp 89-90

51. T C Smout, A Century of the Scottish People 1830-1950, Collins, London, 1986, Chapter 1, 'Scotland in the 1830s and 1840s', p 9.
52. List of Airdrie town councillors 1821-1921 and their occupations in :  
  
James Knox, Airdrie: A Historical Sketch, Baird and Hamilton, Airdrie, 1921, Appendix V.
53. see: Geoffrey Best, Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-1875, Fontana Press, London, 1979, esp. Section I: 'The Mid-Victorian Environment', p 19-92.
54. A good short discussion of this characterisation in: D G Wright, Popular Radicalism: The Working Class Experience 1780-1880, Longman, London, 1988. Chapter 7: 'The Mid-Victorian Consensus. 1850-1880', pp 150-182.

## CHAPTER SIX

### IMAGES AND REALITIES: AIRDRIE AFTER 1820

#### Dame Fortune's Golden Smile

The entry on Airdrie in Pigot's New Commercial Directory of 1826 conveyed the impression of an up-and-coming town on the brink of reaping the benefits from prosperity generated by the success of the coal and iron industries. Airdrie was presented as commercially diverse and an attractive place for merchants, tradesmen and shopkeepers.<sup>1</sup>

Ten years later, an expanded entry in Pigot's National Directory sought to illustrate how the town had "advanced and was flourishing".<sup>2</sup> It was now amply provided with religious and philanthropic enterprises, and blessed with ordered local government. There were, among other things, "pleasure grounds" for the public and many "neat residences" and "handsome villas".<sup>3</sup>

Samuel Lewis's Topographical Dictionary of Scotland, (1846) repeated images of a vibrant and prosperous Airdrie. Well laid-out, trouble free and a rather pleasant environment for its inhabitants:

"The town is regularly built; the houses are of neat appearance and the streets are well-paved, lighted with gas, and watched..."<sup>4</sup>

Industry and commerce, local government, religion and philanthropy operated together in apparent harmony pro bono publicco. In 1851 the Parliamentary Gazetteer of Scotland summed up comment on Airdrie in that value-laden adjective "neat".<sup>5</sup>

Together, the aforementioned sketches of Airdrie represented one kind of official view of the town. They presented a public image that could be turned to respectable outsiders and paid homage to that quintessentially nineteenth century deity "Progress". From a Pigot's or Lewis's eye-view Airdrie was a thriving, peaceful township basking in the warm rays of industrial and commercial prosperity. However, this image of Airdrie contrasted sharply with that projected by government officials, two of whom stand out: Thomas Tancred and Seymoure Tremenheere.

"Slavish Labour and Brutal Intemperance." - Tancred and Tremenheere's Airdrie.

Appointed by the Children's Employment Commission in 1841 to investigate and report back on the employment of children in the coal and ironstone mines and ironworks of



the West of Scotland, Thomas Tancred was of Northumberland gentry stock, solidly middle class and of liberal opinion.<sup>6</sup>

During his travels throughout the West of Scotland in pursuit of evidence for his report Tancred quickly recognised the key importance of the parishes of Old and New Monkland, and within them the towns of Coatbridge and Airdrie, as centres of the Lanarkshire coal and ironstone industries.

Although full of praise for the economic results of industrialisation Tancred was shocked by its social impact, especially by the living and working conditions of the industrial labour force. He was severely critical of the kind of society that industrialisation was producing. Indeed, he thought that social conditions were so bad that

"However splendid the... results may appear when viewed only in relation to the cheap and rapid production of pig-iron, when we turn our attention to the state of society... the feelings of triumph subside, and we cannot but deplore the utter inadequacy of our institutions..."<sup>7</sup>

Squalor and deprivation were escalating among the greater proportion of the West Scotland population which was mostly made up of workers in the coal and iron industries, many of whom were Irish immigrants. Tancred suggested that social conditions were leading to a situation where public order, public health and morals were threatened with extinction. Provision of religious and educational establishments which

ought to have elevated the industrial workers from their "depravity" - or at the very least prevented them from becoming depraved in the first place - was woefully inadequate.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the coal and ironmasters were doing little or nothing to better the circumstances of their employees.<sup>9</sup>

What Tancred discovered was that colliers, ironstone miners and ironworkers and their families endured terrible physical hardships at work and returned home to live in bad housing in an overcrowded, dirty, disease-ridden environment. Not even relatively high wages could mitigate the effects of over-work, squalor and deprivation. Drink, drunkenness and violence appeared to be the main forms of leisure or escapism - in Tancred's view "immorality" - and even these activities did little to relieve the misery of unrelenting toil.

Tancred's remarks applied to the whole of the West of Scotland region under his investigation although they were based on evidence that he had gathered on the spot from various districts which he visited personally. Yet in many respects his final report is as superficial in its portrayal of Airdrie as is Pigot's for he did not appear to notice that in spite of many similarities among places and people in the region there were also many differences.

Tancred chose to illustrate his overall impression by detailing the conditions he found at Coatbridge. But he made it clear that in other places, such as Airdrie, things were much the same. "About Coatbridge and Airdrie", Tancred concluded "Everything that meets the eye or ear tells of slavish labour and brutal intemperance."<sup>10</sup> He described the sight of dirt, smoke and furnaces that blazed night and day, seven days a week, which met one's eyes from the hill above Coatbridge - a hill on which the iron family, the Bairds of Gartsherrie, had paid for the erection of a new Established Church.<sup>11</sup> One of Tancred's witnesses was Robert Baird of Gartsherrie who said of the scene at Coatbridge that there was "not a worse place out of hell."<sup>12</sup> (Baird was, apparently, oblivious to the connection between his family's business pursuits and the hellishness of the local environment).

In paying more detailed attention to Coatbridge as the basis for his generalisations, however, Tancred seems to have been unaware that many of his comments could not be readily applied to Airdrie. He stated that

"The population of Coatbridge consists almost exclusively of colliers and ironworkers, with no gentry or middle class beyond a few managers of works and their clerks."<sup>13</sup>

He went on to say that at Coatbridge domestic discomfort, drunkenness and wretchedness was the lot of almost the entire population.<sup>14</sup>

However, Coatbridge had a quite different history and pattern of development from Airdrie. The former grew up during the 1830s along the banks of the Monkland Canal in Old Monkland parish at a distance to the south-west of Airdrie. The canal, the main means of transport for coal before the railways took over, was the critical factor in the siting of ironworks and blast-furnaces which formed the "iron-heart" of Coatbridge.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, the Bairds of Gartsherrie, followed by other local ironmasters, forged ahead to establish Coatbridge and the villages in its immediate vicinity as the pre-eminent iron manufacturing area of Scotland.<sup>16</sup> The Bairds became the super-rich<sup>17</sup> of their day and extended their interests beyond coal and iron into town planning. Between 1834 and 1851 they bought up lands around their ironworks and set about creating what amounted to a company town.<sup>18</sup> Coatbridge town centre street plan was decided in the Gartsherrie ironworks office and from the end of the 1830s

"central Coatbridge was decisively shaped by the Baird family, their relations and their company directors."<sup>19</sup>

Moreover, as a consequence of the actions, power and influence of the Bairds, Coatbridge was denied burgh status until 1885.

"Even today central Coatbridge is quite distinct from the rest of the town, both in the character of its

sandstone buildings, and in the distance that physically separates it from other parts. This is no accident. For the Bairds, like the other iron and coal masters, deliberately tried to keep the town as a collection of separate villages - Coatbridge, Coatdyke, Gartsherrie, Whifflet and Langloan - as part of their opposition to making it into a burgh."<sup>20</sup>

Airdrie, however, was not a company town and the Burgh Act of 1821 was the political expression of an already established fact; namely, the existence of an historic, distinct and vital community at Airdrie. More importantly, Airdrie did have a substantial middle class dominated as much by commercial as by landed or industrial interests. Wretchedness was not the condition of almost the entire population even though the majority were working class and poor. Indeed, Airdrie's distinctiveness as a community was reinforced by the rise of Coatbridge.

Nevertheless, the testimonies of Tancred's Airdrie witnesses make for grim reading as do those of witnesses who appeared before another government official, Seymoure Tremenheere. Tremenheere, like Tancred, was of English gentry stock. He had been educated at Winchester and Oxford and was a member of the Reform Club.<sup>21</sup> He was appointed to the Commission on the State of the Mining Populations in 1843 to inquire into the operation of the Mines Act (1842). His investigations into and report on the mining population of Lanarkshire appeared in 1844.<sup>22</sup>

It has been argued that Tremenheere "found most of the people in the Scottish mining industry uncongenial. Even the mineowners seemed to him to be 'grasping and uncouth'."<sup>23</sup> Like Tancred, Tremenheere was disturbed by the attitudes of miners themselves and by their squalid living conditions and "moral depravity".<sup>24</sup> However, the view that neither Tancred nor Tremenheere "could be expected to show a deep and sympathetic understanding of the Lanarkshire miners..."<sup>25</sup> is not entirely fair. On reading the reports of both officials one can detect not only a good deal of sympathy with the miners but also understanding of the reasons for the miners' plight. Neither Tancred nor Tremenheere thought that the miners should be excused from personal responsibility for their living conditions and habits but Tremenheere in particular went a long way towards writing a damaging critique of unrestricted laissez-faire capitalism as practised by the Lanarkshire coal and ironmasters. His criticisms exhibit a thorough grasp of the mechanics of early nineteenth century industrial capitalism and of entrepreneurs' lack of foresight in counting the human cost of their enterprises.

Tremenheere paid tribute to the "vast fabric of successful industry"<sup>26</sup> built up in Lanarkshire but attacked the employers for failing to calculate the effects of industrialisation on the hearts and minds of the human beings who though "subordinate" were "fellow workers". It should have been foreseen, he argued,

"by the most inevitable process of logical induction, that the circumstances surrounding them must as infallibly lead to a great variety of bad consequences, as if those consequences themselves had been expressly intended and wished for."<sup>27</sup>

Among employers there was a misplaced expectation that someone else would step in to deal with the shocking conditions of the workforce.<sup>28</sup> Although as much concerned with the morality of the miners as with their physical hardships Tremenheere made no attempt to disguise the consequences of the latter. Indeed, while he condemned the "gross intemperance" of miners and the "unrestricted sale of ardent spirits" especially at Coatbridge and Airdrie,<sup>29</sup> he also pinpointed the root cause of miners' excessive use of alcohol.

"The dull and depressing nature of their work, pursued in darkness for so many hours, must undoubtedly predispose their minds to seek excitement after it is over. The dirt and discomfort of their houses, the want of privacy, the absence of mental or other resources...lead them to seek that excitement in brooding over their real or imaginary grievances, or in gross sensuality. The latter breaks out chiefly on the fortnightly or monthly pay-nights, and is continued often for days."<sup>30</sup>

As with Tancred, Tremenheere focused his attention on the Coatbridge and Airdrie districts as the heart of industrial Lanarkshire. However, perhaps with a keener eye for local difference, Tremenheere's report provided important evidence on the distinctiveness of Airdrie. It is from



Tremenheere that an oft-quoted and much misunderstood passage on Airdrie during pay-nights is taken. On such nights, Tremeneheere noted,

"it is estimated that upwards of 10,000 people flock into the town of Airdrie from the surrounding villages. Scenes of uncontrolled license ensue, which there are no means of either preventing or punishing."<sup>31</sup>

From this passage T C Smout (quoting in turn from Alan B Campbell) forms the impression of Airdrie as a frontier town

"ramshackle and dangerous... where rival bands of Orange and Green beat one another up outside the pubs... the truckshops and towering furnaces."<sup>32</sup>

Now apart from the fact that "towering furnaces" were by and large located in Coatbridge, not Airdrie, the real point about Tremeneheere's observations on Airdrie during pay-nights is that the breakdown of law and order on these occasions was as much a consequence of outsiders coming in as of insiders fighting among themselves. If Tremeneheere's estimation is correct then it would mean that pay-night revellers coming into Airdrie were equivalent in numbers to almost the entire population of the burgh. In other words Airdrie was a leisure centre for the population of an extensive hinterland. With its long-established, highly developed public-house network it certainly merited the



image of a frontier town. But in evidence to Tremenheere Airdrie witnessess were adamant that trouble was imported as well as indigenous, and they thought that Airdrie ought not to derive its reputation from the behaviour of incomers. The Airdrie superintendent of police admitted the inability of his force to control riotous colliers and the assaults and petty thieving which occurred on pay-nights.<sup>33</sup> Mr Robertson, surgeon at Airdrie, repeated these complaints but also noted that among the "better disposed" of Airdrie colliers there was much disgust and annoyance about invasions by outsiders. Indeed, following his witnesses' counsel Tremenheere concluded that any increase in the police force of Airdrie

"would be of comparatively little benefit unless some superintendence was also at the same time brought to bear upon the neighbouring villages..."<sup>34</sup>

In short, even as a frontier town Airdrie did not lose its sense of identity and distinctiveness. Although there was enormous pressure from without there was a demand from within, which could cut across all social classes, that Airdrie's identity should not be destroyed by outsiders.

In their alternative official view of Airdrie both Tancred and Tremenheere were addressing the same respectable audience as Pigot's Directory or Lewis's Topographical Dictionary. But Tancred and Tremenheere's Airdrie, dirty, disorderly, violent and dangerous was a world away from

Pigot's or Lewis's neat and well-governed town. This inconsistency in representations is partly explained by the fact that the government officials were addressing and expressing the anxieties and even fear among the middle and upper classes occasioned by the growth of industrial districts.<sup>35</sup> But although official opinion could be hostile, especially when the atmosphere in the industrial towns and cities was thick with radical politics and labour disputes, hostility was also generated inside places like Airdrie against the views of outsiders.

"For the Industrious Classes and the Public  
Good" - Radical Airdrie

When government officials depicted Airdrie as a town threatened by social upheaval they were concerned not only about the material and moral condition of the working classes but also about the lack - as they saw it - of social control and the resulting excesses of negative freedom or "licence" among those classes. Such views were rejected by Airdrie radicals who through their writings and activities also focused on the condition of labouring and poor people but emphasised that these people were exploited and without freedom.

The general pattern of expansion of the small towns of Scotland in the 1830s and '40s fostered a bourgeois

liberalism that has been characterised as the expression of successful enterprise, rising comfort and self-respect.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, in many of the burghs of regality and barony "local conditions provoked a radicalism that was sharper than the middle class liberalism of a county town."<sup>37</sup> Such radicalism was born out of local conditions in Airdrie. It championed the causes of skilled artisans and of the working classes in general because it was these groupings that were excluded from full participation in municipal and national government structures.

Located on the "left wing" of the Whig-Liberal political bloc, Airdrie radicalism was subservient neither to aristocratic reformism nor to the emerging Benthamite ideology of the rising middle classes. It derived its colour from the weavers' radicalism of 1819-20. By the 'thirties and 'forties although several radicals of the 1819 campaigns were still active, leadership had passed from weavers to professional men of one kind or another.<sup>38</sup> This professionalisation of local radicalism, however, did not result in any abandonment of the radical inheritance from the weaving tradition. On the contrary, Airdrie radicals retained close ties with the weavers and with weaving culture.

Airdrie radicals argued that the hardship of the majority "industrial classes" was not an evil dangerous to the peace, comfort and well-being of respectable middle class

or artisan life but was rather an affront to humanity. Their condemnations of industrial capitalism were couched as much in moral as economic terms. The human misery caused by industrialisation was portrayed as downright unchristian and a blemish on local honour. How, radicals asked, could anyone feel proud of a town which permitted many of its citizens to live in ignorance, want and squalor?

Of Airdrie's leading radicals in the 'thirties and 'forties the most prominent were William Miller, John Craig, Dr John Barlas, Dr William Saunders, a lawyer named Granger and Malcolm McCallum, a bookseller.<sup>39</sup> Among this group the most famous was Miller (1797-1862).

A weaver's son and leading light in Airdrie's Reform Union of 1819-20, Miller had been imprisoned for his provocative speeches and actions. On his release "Radical Wull" became a dominie at Airdrie where for sixteen years he taught in a school for the children of the working classes.<sup>40</sup> During the 1830s he was a prolific writer and at the forefront of efforts to establish local journalism. He initiated and helped to edit the Airdrie Literary Album which appeared weekly from December 1828 till May 1829.<sup>41</sup> Published under the auspices of the Glasgow Free Press, for which Miller acted as Airdrie correspondent,<sup>42</sup> the Album was an attempt to provide Airdrie with a regular periodical. Indeed, its

chief aim was to express, foster and nourish local patriotism.<sup>43</sup>

Further journalistic enterprises in Airdrie were heavily indebted to the radical-Miller tradition. One of the more successful began in the middle 'forties when the Airdrie and Coatbridge Luminary was launched.<sup>44</sup> The Luminary expressed a more sophisticated and acerbic radical line than previous local publications, and was an important voice for the industrial working classes and the poor addressing itself in particular to miners. It openly declared its liberal politics but strongly asserted its editorial independence. The editors thought themselves,

"entitled to the confidence of the people in prosecuting an undertaking exclusively by a regard for the Public Good - because they know of no other publication started upon an equal footing of independence and exemption from Party spirit."<sup>45</sup>

In a statement of aims the first edition of the Luminary staked its claim to be a local organ of public opinion, professed its opposition to monopoly, and advocated improvement on a range of social and economic issues including the extension of the franchise, the repeal of taxes on the press and the elevation of the working classes:

"The People! we adopt their causes as our own. We behold the great body of them, if not oppressed, shamefully neglected; and we will reason, remonstrate and report on everything calculated to better their condition."<sup>46</sup>

Articles carried in the Luminary, whether on the relation of wages and labour, the duties of employers and employees, sanitary reform or domestic economy, were characterised by a rejection of the paternalistic philanthropy of the affluent classes and a demand that the "unjustly termed 'lower classes'" fight and gain improvements for themselves, by themselves.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, however, the Luminary was not afraid to criticise "self-destructive" habits among the industrious classes especially intemperance, improvidence and slovenliness.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the high moral, almost Evangelical tone of the paper reflected its position on ecclesiastical questions for it held passionately to dissenting, anti-establishment views and enthusiastically supported the religious free-trade of the post-Disruption years.

The radicalism of the Luminary was descended from that which had burst into activity in the Spring of 1831 in the campaign for parliamentary reform, activity which was closely connected with weavers' attempts to organise a trades union. It was, indeed, the formation of an Airdrie Trades Union that gave birth to a revived Airdrie Political Union which during the Reform crisis of May 1831 organised meetings, a petition to the Commons and an address to the King.<sup>49</sup>

Although the passage of the Reform Bill was greeted at Airdrie with "great rejoicings" - a committee of the municipal authorities and trades organised a Reform Jubilee that was marked by processions and by public speeches from Whigs and Radicals<sup>50</sup> - neither the radically inclined town council nor the Political Union were fully satisfied with the Bill. In particular, they denounced the property qualification for the franchise, demanded household suffrage and called for reforms aimed more directly at alleviating the poverty-stricken condition of the people.<sup>51</sup>

After 1832 Airdrie radicalism received a welcome boost from the local parliamentary representative, William Downe Gillon. Gillon was a landowner from West Lothian<sup>52</sup> elected MP for the Falkirk Burghs - of which Airdrie was one - in the general election for the first reformed parliament in December 1832.<sup>53</sup> There can be no disputing Gillon's reforming credentials. As a keen supporter of weavers and their causes he managed to attract a solid body of support in Airdrie. During the 1832 election campaign he was the only candidate who satisfied Airdrie's radicals and weavers,<sup>54</sup> and his condemnation of the Established Church, indeed of any link between Church and State, won him many friends among the town's influential dissenting lobby.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, as we will see later, his Voluntaryism did nothing to diminish his support among radical members of Airdrie's quoad sacra Established churches. Throughout his time as MP for the Falkirk Burghs, Gillon's radical-



liberalism kept him in touch with Airdrie's weaving population and did much to keep the weavers' desperate plight high on the local political agenda. His eventual defeat by William Baird of Gartsherrie, ironmaster, Tory, and Established churchman,<sup>56</sup> though it provoked scenes of disorder in Airdrie,<sup>57</sup> was in some respects an indication of the diminished political power of weavers and weaving culture in the wake of industrialisation.

The actions of Airdrie radicals did not, on their own, give much cause for concern to government officials or others writing about the town in the 1830s and 1840s. In the first place, the local radical leaders, though drawn from across the social spectrum, were mainly from professional middle class and artisan sections of the community. The prominence of medical doctors was a reflection of their familiarity with the unhealthy living and working conditions of the labouring classes and of their belief that, in the name of a common humanity, something must be done to alleviate such distress. In the second place, the Airdrie radicals, despite aggressive language and calls for greater democracy, had no thought of social revolution by violence. There can be no doubt, however, that a combination, or rather the co-existence of radical politics and industrial unrest during the 'thirties and 'forties lent weight to outsiders impression of Airdrie as a disorderly town on the brink of social chaos.



The People's Flag - Airdrie Trades Unionism  
and Chartism

Airdrie radical politics was an important framework within which the town's weavers fought to protect their living standards and to improve their conditions during the 1830s. Indeed, weavers' unionism was too closely linked with radical politics to function as a completely independent force. This tended to temper the actions of combining weavers for it meant that their unions battled along a much wider front than did, for instance, the miners' unions.

At Airdrie, as throughout the West of Scotland, the heyday of weavers' unionism, at least in terms of the quantity of activity, was between 1832 and 1837. It was a measure not only of the continuing importance of weaving in the Airdrie economy but also of the difficulties into which the trade had fallen. Weavers' unionism in Airdrie has been described and analyzed in some detail by Paul Mitchell, and the following brief summary of its main features and activities owes much to Mitchell's work.<sup>58</sup>

Airdrie weavers had been involved in the famous strike of 1812.<sup>59</sup> Twelve years later the local branch of the General Association of Weavers had 450 members and this branch took part in a successful strike against low pay in 1826.<sup>60</sup> Combined activity among Airdrie weavers then entered a period of quiescence and did not reappear until 1832 when,

following the Reform Bill, an Airdrie branch of the Glasgow based National General Protection Union was set up.<sup>61</sup> Airdrie GPU hoped to benefit from parliamentary reform and from the election of William Gillon. From autumn 1832, with Gillon's and local radicals' support, the weavers began campaigning directly in their own interests seeing in trade unionism a complement to wider political activity though not an alternative to it.<sup>62</sup>

Throughout the spring of 1833 the union tried hard to obtain relief from, and remedies for deepening distress among the town's weaving population. Its main activity centred on petitioning Parliament for government intervention to relieve the situation at Airdrie where want had become so universal that the union had little difficulty in obtaining the backing of radicals and of weaving agents. Indeed, five of the most prominent agents - two of whom were baillies - signed documents drawn-up by the union testifying to the extent and severity of distress at Airdrie.<sup>63</sup> The petitioning of Parliament met with no success but in local terms,

"the union had demonstrated the strength which lay in the apparently unchallenged position of the weavers among the towns people."<sup>64</sup>

In the late summer of 1833 tension between weavers and employers all across the cotton districts of the West of Scotland mounted. This was a direct consequence of the

Glasgow manufacturers imposition of wage cuts in the "country districts"<sup>65</sup> The response of the GPU was swift. Glasgow branch - the most important and powerful - sent delegates out around the region to encourage weavers to resist the employers by refusing to take in low paid work. Faced with this confident militancy a number of employers reversed their decision to cut wages. Of the Glasgow manufacturers putting out work to Airdrie, however, one, Robert Walker, steadfastly refused to return wages to previous levels and condemned the union for interfering with his right to employ whom he chose at whatever rate of pay he set.<sup>66</sup> Walker's Airdrie weavers struck work and although he tried to move his business elsewhere the GPU managed to persuade weavers throughout the West of Scotland to turn down his work.<sup>67</sup> The strike at Airdrie continued through October and November and when Walker capitulated in early December it was hailed as a notable victory for weavers' unionism and radicalism against the high-handed actions of a powerful employer.<sup>68</sup>

A slight up-turn in the weaving trade during 1834 did little to alleviate the acute distress at Airdrie and the local union continued with its activities buoyed by their success in the Walker dispute. Gillon participated in preparations for a Select Committee on Hand Loom Weavers in the summer while the union worked towards a new petitioning of Parliament. In early December Airdrie delegates joined with others from branches throughout the

West of Scotland in a meeting at Glasgow to organise the new petitioning campaign.<sup>69</sup> The GPU was now receiving backing from John Maxwell, MP for Lanark County from his successful election in 1832.<sup>70</sup> (Maxwell consistently supported the weavers cause during his campaigns to become a county MP between 1832 and 1835).<sup>71</sup> On reaching Parliament he took up the cudgels on behalf of the weavers throughout Britain and became their principal parliamentary spokesman.<sup>72</sup>

The petition from the Airdrie weavers and their supporters which arose from the December 1834 initiative was presented to Parliament in April 1835.<sup>73</sup> Although the breadth of support was remarkable - the petition was signed by the town council, the ministers of Airdrie and by "persons of every rank and party"<sup>74</sup> - the petition, along with others from elsewhere, produced no results.

During 1836 the Airdrie union, in line with national GPU policy,<sup>75</sup> again fought to resist a round of wage cuts. It achieved some minor successes but the years of hard campaigning since 1832 had sapped union strength. By the close of 1836 the Airdrie union was bankrupt.<sup>76</sup> The deepening poverty of the weavers had reduced their morale and left them unable to afford a trade union. An appeal for funds to the Honourable Weavers Society in February 1837 looked as if it might prove fruitful but by the time

an agreement had been reached in May the union's organisation had collapsed.<sup>77</sup>

1837 marked the beginning of a serious crisis in Scottish cotton hand loom weaving.<sup>78</sup> Prices rose sharply and wages were again reduced. At Airdrie poverty and unemployment among the weavers worsened.<sup>79</sup> Reductions in wages were easy to impose because of the weakness of unionism, a shortage of work and an over-supply of weavers. By April there was at least 400 unemployed weavers<sup>80</sup> in the town and these, not being entitled to poor relief (except by convention), hovered on the edge of utter destitution. Unemployment prompted some weavers to accept manual work in other industries where they themselves undercut the wages of existing employees. Tension mounted and tempers flared. April 1837 also saw the beginning of a strike by miners around Airdrie (see below) following attempts by local Tory ironmasters to proscribe colliers unionism and to reduce wages. This was the occasion for a series of confrontations between miners and weavers when unemployed weavers were taken out to work in strike bound pits.<sup>81</sup> When the miners strike collapsed in August it left behind, "an atmosphere of bitter recriminations in the working class community."<sup>82</sup>

The Airdrie branch of the GPU was not only coloured by the weavers' experience of the parliamentary reform campaign of 1831-32 but was also supported by local radicals who

themselves expressed a radicalism that owed much to Airdrie's weaving tradition. For this reason, the Airdrie weavers' union was a powerful voice of community and was able to command sympathy from a broad section of the town's population. Although the union activities were often directed towards GPU national policy the focus of its concerns was usually local and it was local circumstances which determined the strength and resolve of the union's responses to attacks on pay and conditions by employers. By petitioning Parliament the Airdrie weavers sought to win nationally applicable solutions by government intervention. But they also wanted action to deal specifically with distress in Airdrie. Furthermore, the union was only ever one option from a wide range of other activities - friendly societies, savings bank, churches - which, as Mitchell has pointed out, rooted the weavers in the community in which they lived.<sup>83</sup> There was certainly a consciousness of a common fate among weavers throughout the nation but it was never as potent an influence on weaver's actions as local concerns. Mitchell has argued that the demise of the weavers union in Airdrie signalled a turning point in the town's identity. The conflict between miners and weavers in 1837 was indicative of its changing economic base.<sup>84</sup> In these respects, weaver's unionism was a product of the decline of the trade, an attempt to halt and if possible reverse the proletarianisation of weavers. Weavers unionism could thus be characterised - as indeed it was by Symons<sup>85</sup> - as essentially backward looking.

Miners trade unions of the 1830s and '40s also tried to prevent the proletarianisation of a workforce with proud traditions of independency. However, they were not symptomatic of the decline of the coal trade so much as a diminishing of miners' power within an expanding and highly profitable industry. The growing militancy of miners' unions was an expression of miners' awareness of the key importance of the coal industry and of the enormous profits which their labours won for coal owners and employers. Miners thought themselves quite justified in demanding a fair share of these profits in the form of high wages, decent living and working conditions, and reasonable working hours.

There can be no doubt that miners throughout Scotland were bound together by common experiences, of which work was the primary and formative one. Work helped to determine most aspects of miners and their families' lives: their health, accommodation, social status, neighbourhood life, leisure and income. But miners did not live and work in the same places. In Airdrie, although miners in the coal industry were the largest single occupational group in the town by 1861<sup>86</sup>, this did not mean that the town was a mining community in the same way that, for instance, nearby Greengairs was a mining community; that is, where almost every man was a miner. Moreover, as has been noted, Airdrie miners were among those who objected to the



invasions of the town on pay-nights - an invasion principally by other miners. Nevertheless, it would be unreasonable to ignore or dismiss those crucial elements of similarity which gave unity to the miners as a distinctive socio-economic group in early nineteenth century Scotland, especially in the Central Belt. Between 1779 and the 1830s colliers had developed a keen sense of the value of their labour and tried to maintain their status in a collective manner.<sup>87</sup> After 1830, however, the culture and prosperity of the independent colliers impacted against socio-economic changes which threatened to undermine the concept of independence.<sup>88</sup>

First, the rapid growth of the West of Scotland coal and iron industries led to the appearance of larger mining and iron manufacturing companies

"whose concern for industrial efficiency and discipline conflicted... with the self-regulating patterns of the independent colliers and policies of their unions."<sup>89</sup>

Second, in their pursuit of a disciplined workforce, low costs and high profits coal masters and, more especially, the iron companies were assisted

"by the changing level of the market for mining labour. Economic depression and famine drove thousands of newcomers, especially Irish immigrants into the industry so that the traditional Scots colliers no longer had a monopoly of the trade."<sup>90</sup>



From 1790 to 1830 miners' unionism in the West of Scotland was well established, organised and fairly successful. Policy was broadly aimed at maintaining the relative prosperity of the colliers particularly during times of depression in the trade. During this same period strategies were developed which formed the basis of unions' policies until the late nineteenth century.<sup>91</sup> Colliers unions were for the most part strictly industrial institutions and thus operated on a narrower front than the weavers combinations so the principal tactic of miners' unions - both in the pre and post-1830 period - was restriction of output which, when ineffective, gave way to complete downing of tools.<sup>92</sup> These practices were not exceptional but standard, traditional negotiating methods employed by colliers to protect their interests. Restriction of output and strike action were part of collier culture.

By the 1830s colliers' unions were fighting not just to maintain the independence and prosperity of members but also to defend themselves against increasingly aggressive attempts by employers to diminish collier status. Employers wanted to destroy traditional work practices and to reduce wages while expanding mining operations. One of their most powerful weapons for the implementation of their objectives was the influx of unskilled labour prepared to undertake colliery work at reduced wages. Furthermore, restriction of output and strike action - which had never

been accepted by employers as legitimate bargaining counters - were coming to be regarded by owners, masters and government as definitely illegitimate for nothing should be allowed to interfere with market forces. As the principles of political economy and laissez-faire tightened their grip on middle and upper class imagination, so employers in the coal and iron industries were permitted to go to almost any lengths to defend their interests and ensure the free play of laws of supply and demand. Industrial disputes in the coal industry were usually concerned with wages. But on top of and related to this immediate issue there was a broader struggle between masters and miners, a struggle for control both of the coal market and the labour market.<sup>93</sup>

In many respects, weavers' trade unions were a natural extension of weavers' friendly societies. Both kinds of organisation operated on a similar basis. They were respectable, sober and provident set up to protect weavers and their families from economic hardship not to attack the economic system as such. Even in hard times, criticisms of the economic system per se remained reformist rather than revolutionary.

Similarly, miners' unions, present among Airdrie colliers especially in the 'thirties and 'forties when New Monkland coalfields began to be exploited on an unprecedented scale,

were strongly influenced by the ethos of miners friendly societies.<sup>94</sup> These, like the weavers societies, were

"serious minded, cautious and respectable... and found favour among a large section of the mining population of the West of Scotland."<sup>95</sup>

As with other collier friendly societies the two principal Airdrie organisations - Airdrie Miners' Friendly Society (1832) and Airdrie Colliers' Friendly Society (1840)<sup>96</sup> - aimed to provide members with sickness benefit, help with funeral expenses and gave small sums to widows. In addition, as with weavers' societies, those of miners served as schools for trade union members and potential union leaders. Nearly all the early miners' trade unions in the West of Scotland during the first half of the nineteenth century were "sober in their aims and cautious in their organisation."<sup>97</sup>

However, from the late 'twenties miners' unions caution was increasingly at odds with employers aggressive policies. The restriction of output tactic turned to strike action more and more frequently.

At Airdrie miners were heavily involved in the industrial strife which racked the West of Scotland coal trade in the years after 1832. But it was in 1837 that Airdrie hit the headlines as a centre of confrontation.<sup>98</sup> By this date colliers throughout the West of Scotland had united into a

General Union in an effort to coordinate local actions, to take control of the coal trade and to capitalise on successful action to raise wages that had been pursued in 1836.<sup>99</sup> This success had led employers to raise coal prices and as long as the iron trade was buoyant high prices for coal and high wages for colliers could be sustained - or at least so the employers argued.<sup>100</sup> However, winter 1836/37 brought with it an economic depression and inaugurated a period of protracted slump that reached a crisis point in 1842.<sup>101</sup> Iron prices began to fall and wages were cut. Colliers resorted to restriction of output in a vain attempt to protect wages. Strikes and then lockouts followed and became general throughout the West of Scotland coal trade. Both coal and iron masters embarked on a campaign of strikebreaking by bringing in unemployed or starving weavers from Airdrie to work in the district's strikebound pits. Airdrie miners responded by forming themselves into bands of "flying pickets" and the situation became so highly charged that the Sheriff of Lanarkshire, Archibald Alison, ordered the stationing of troops in Airdrie.<sup>102</sup>

The strikes of 1837 were "the climacteric of some forty years of collective activity by Lanarkshire colliers."<sup>103</sup> But they also marked the beginning of a new phase of industrial militancy as the depression deepened and employers pressed ahead with their plans to keep profits

up, wages low and to create a more disciplined workforce out of the heterogeneous, migratory mining population.

Failure in 1837 had crippled the miners' union and it was to be 1842 before there was any revival of formal organisation in the Monkland parishes or, indeed, in the Glasgow mining district.<sup>104</sup> When the unions did recoup their strength, however, Airdrie, Coatbridge and Holytown were key centres in the strike policy of the West of Scotland miners which culminated in a widespread downing of tools in August 1842.<sup>105</sup> The scale of this dispute worried the government even more than 1837 had done for it coincided with strikes of textile workers and others in the cotton trade at Manchester and with strikes among industrial workers in Yorkshire, Derbyshire and the Black Country.

"the... Government declared a state of emergency and prepared to mobilise all the forces of law and order... to deal with... disturbances...."<sup>106</sup>

Once again, Archibald Alison ordered troops to Airdrie.

"Airdrie was once more the epicentre of disturbance. A strike committee was formed there to organise fund-raising, mass meetings, liaison with other districts to decide upon tactics and to negotiate with the mineowners."<sup>107</sup>

All to no avail. The strike dragged on into the autumn when in the wake of employers' concessions some men began to drift back to work.<sup>108</sup>

Although it was a sometimes violent and disorderly dispute the strike of 1842 did point towards a renewal in the strength and unity of West Scotland miners unionism.<sup>109</sup> A Miners' Association of Great Britain was formed in December 1842. Though it made little headway in the West of Scotland until after 1843, the Association eventually became firmly established in the coal centres of Airdrie, Coatbridge and Holytown which had reported branch memberships of 1,000, 600 and 800 respectively by January 1844.<sup>110</sup> Later in that year successful strike action centring on these three towns resulted in a modest wage increase for miners<sup>111</sup> but from this point onwards "the Miners' Association began to lose its grip on its Scottish members."<sup>112</sup>

Nevertheless, in spite of weakening commitment to trades unions Airdrie miners remained important players in the major strikes in the West of Scotland coalfields in 1847, '50, '54, '55 and '56.<sup>113</sup> Thereafter, Airdrie miners' role diminished and by the 1860s they were relatively quiescent.<sup>114</sup>

On the run-up to the 1837 dispute and the from that of 1842 the strike proneness of the Airdrie miners was a direct consequence of recurrent tension between the aggressive policies of employers - led by the Coatbridge ironmasters - and relatively strong union organisation in

Airdrie and district. From the mid 'fifties the relative calm of Airdrie miners was a reflection of weakening union organisation coupled with growing success of employers long term goal of stabilising the mining population. Throughout the West of Scotland employers' policies seeking to impose social control through industrial discipline, systems of housing tenure, and the notorious truck-shops,<sup>115</sup> proved to be reasonably effective. Government for the most part applauded the employers and encouraged the policing of mining communities. More ambiguously, employers had in philanthropy and religion other means of social control. Above all, however, as mining required a less mobile labour force so miners themselves became adjusted to living in towns such as Airdrie. Union militancy was partly a reflection of rootlessness and diminished as miners became settled in particular places. Even in 1842, localism had been a powerful agent in undermining the industrial tactics of the unions. By the 1860s Airdrie miners were an established sector of Airdrie's population spending their money in its shops, attending its churches, joining its clubs and societies, sending their children to its schools and so on. Indeed precisely because Airdrie was changing at the same time as miners settled they were able to develop their own sense of belonging to the town.

Industrial unrest among miners in 1837 and the collapse of the local branch of the weavers' union formed the immediate context of support for Chartism.<sup>116</sup> Detailed research on



Airdrie's Chartists has still to be carried out but preliminary enquiries suggest that there was a hard core of weavers and to a lesser extent miners organised in the Airdrie Working Men's Association agitating for Universal Manhood Suffrage and the other five points of the Peoples Charter. The Airdrie Chartists adhered to the moderate wing of the movement and stood by the moral force principles laid down in the Calton Hill resolutions of December 1838.<sup>117</sup> From this date until 1841-2 weavers and weaving traditions dominated Airdrie Chartism.<sup>118</sup>

L.C. Wright has argued that from January 1840 when Scottish Chartists embarked on a campaign of encouraging Working Men's (Universal Suffrage) Associations (WMA) to petition Parliament, they were imitating the policy of the Anti-Corn Law League.<sup>119</sup> Petitioning Parliament, however, had a long tradition both in local politics and outside the political sphere altogether. This tradition ante-dated the Anti-Corn Law League. Weavers were well-practised in the art of petitioning. The Chartists were not necessarily imitating the Anti-Corn Law League but rather were acting within the framework of conventional political culture.

At any rate, under the impetus of the petition strategy public meetings were held in localities throughout Scotland and hundred of petitions were forwarded to Parliament from individuals, groups and Working Men's Associations.<sup>120</sup> The Airdrie WMA backed the petition campaign and set about



implementing it in March 1840.<sup>121</sup> A high point was reached on May 4 when a public meeting of the inhabitants of the burgh was held in Wellwynd Church to discuss a petition to Parliament calling for Universal Manhood Suffrage.<sup>122</sup> Attended by the committee of the WMA and by a deputation from Glasgow, the meeting consisted of rousing speeches, recitations, the singing of "comical and sentimental songs" and a band playing a number of "soul-stirring airs". The result of this gathering, the tone of which suggests that politics was an established and accepted part of popular culture, was a petition for Universal Suffrage signed in the name and by appointment of the meeting.<sup>123</sup>

Towards the close of 1840 a number of leading Scottish Chartists began to take-up the theme of total abstinence. They argued that teetotalism was a popular and respectable cause and that radical political organisations ought to advance their credibility by aligning under its banner.<sup>124</sup> The Chartist newspaper Scottish Patriot gave voice to demands that Chartism should include commitment to teetotalism. When in the New Year of 1841 an appeal signed by one hundred well known Chartists was published in the Chartist Circular asking for the adoption of total abstinence by Chartists, all the senior office bearers of the Airdrie WMA were among the signatories.<sup>125</sup>

Airdrie Chartists were also known for their fervent Voluntaryism.<sup>126</sup> This was indicative of the high profile

which dissenting weavers displayed in the early years of the local Chartist association. There was also support from Airdrie's Chartists for the Non-Intrusionists of the Church of Scotland (the spectacle of the Established Church defying the State appealed to the dissenting instincts).<sup>127</sup> However, it may also be that among some Airdrie Chartists there was dissatisfaction with dissenting religion for a Chartist church existed in the town sometime between 1837 and 1840 and was one of the early depositors in the Airdrie Savings Bank (founded in 1835).<sup>128</sup>

In the course of 1841-42 the complexion of Airdrie Chartism changed.<sup>129</sup> Fergus O' Connor, leading proponent of aggressive militancy in pursuit of the Charter, gradually gained ascendancy over many Chartist organisations in Scotland.<sup>130</sup> His fiery rhetoric and calls for physical force were more in keeping with the traditions of colliers than of weavers and at Airdrie leadership of the local movement seems to have passed to miners.<sup>131</sup> Sheriff Alison thought that the strike of colliers and iron-miners in Lanarkshire, Ayrshire and Lothian in August 1842 owed something to Chartist agitation<sup>132</sup> but the part played by Chartists among the strikers is uncertain.

"Some minor Chartists were to be found at delegate meetings of coal and iron miners urging strike action until the Charter was granted. At one of the large meetings at Airdrie, Thomas Roberts asserted that such a resolution had been adopted in Clackmannanshire, which he represented, and urged that the delegates 'should try to induce other trades, far and near to strike until the Charter'."<sup>133</sup>

The involvement of miners in Chartism at Airdrie was not enough to sustain the local movement and it faded during the mid 'forties - although at some time between 1845 and 1850 there was a branch of O' Connor's Land Company operating within the town.<sup>134</sup> In part, the demise of the local organisation had been caused by the defeat of the miners in the 1842 strike which produced a sense of disillusionment among colliers and a renewed concentration on preparations for future industrial conflict.

There can be no doubt that, at least to begin with, Airdrie Chartism embodied the weavers' long-held belief in political reform as the prerequisite for relief of their depressed condition. The transfer of leadership of the local movement from weavers to miners was yet another sign of the declining influence of weavers in an emerging industrial culture. However, it is also fair to say that miners not only responded to a more militant form of Chartism than the weavers but were also clearly attracted to and by the broader aims of Chartism. In other words, miners participation in Chartism represented a widening of their horizons and marked their emergence as a political as well as an industrial force to be reckoned with in the future. By supporting Chartism miners showed a growing recognition that industrial militancy by itself was no longer enough to secure their interests against attack from employers.

Chartism in Airdrie was another attempt by both weavers and colliers to counter their enforced proletarianisation. In this and other respects it reflected the changing community in which it existed. Airdrie Chartists' advocacy of total abstinence showed an awareness of how widespread and debilitating drunkenness was among the town's labouring population, and was in line with earlier radicals' claims that sobriety was an essential weapon in the working classes' fight to better their lot by themselves. Drunkenness, however much it may have been escapism from hard, unrewarding work, was at the same time self-inflicted injury which undermined the strength and respectability of working people. Moreover - and most significantly of all - the Airdrie Chartists' Voluntaryism, like their temperance, was indicative of the deep and all-pervading quality of Evangelical religion and dissent in the town.

#### The Wheel of Misfortune - Poverty in Airdrie, 1820-1850

Although it remains an open question whether or not Chartism in Airdrie was a product of the politics of hunger it is clear that during the 1830s and '40s poverty in the town was commonplace and was high on the list of political and religious organisations' priorities.

Laurance Saunders has argued that between the extremes of comfort and poverty in the process of peoples' adaptation to economic and social conditions of life in Scottish towns, after 1815, there existed a variety of possible adjustments. The majority of town and city dwellers struck a balance of gains and losses:

"they made a living, more or less effectively, carried into a new situation their expectations of what was due to them, gained or lost skill, security, comfort and self-respect, and passed on a revised version of their code as hopefully as they could to the next generation."<sup>135</sup>

This optimistic, almost evolutionary view of life and living in the towns is unconvincing, however, for two connected reasons.

First, it seems to ignore the fact that many of the people in, and coming into the towns and cities had always been poor and remained so, experiencing neither gains or losses. Second, for such people and for those whose experience of losses tended to outweigh any gains the realities of life in the towns were harsh and miserable in the extreme.

By the 1830s for a large proportion of the populace of Airdrie economic security was not a permanent condition. In addition, insanitary and overcrowded houses fostered discomfort and disease. Poverty was common among weavers, caught in the stranglehold of a depressed trade, while in the coal and iron industries semi or unskilled labourers

were particularly vulnerable to turns of the irregular economic spiral which left them unemployed and prey to eviction and hunger.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, the economic and social realities of an emerging industrial-commercial society could not be squared with the accepted traditions and regulations of the Scottish Poor Laws.<sup>137</sup>

Between 1820 and 1845 the poor and the poor laws became the subject of a vigorous national debate that culminated in the setting up of a Commission of Inquiry in 1842, reporting two years later.<sup>138</sup> Since the system of poor relief was managed locally the problem of the poor and pauperism became a battle-ground of fierce local infighting running beneath, and feeding-off, the national debate. In Airdrie complex webs of alliance and rivalry coloured the arguments. Radicals and reformers fought conservatives; the professional and commercial classes of the town attacked the landed interests of the countryside; dissenters condemned the failures and inadequacies of New Monkland kirk and heritors. It was precisely as a matter of local concern that poverty and poor relief became yet another focus for the renewal and consolidation of Airdrie's identity in the midst of social and economic change.

After the 1821 Burgh Act responsibility for poor relief was not transferred to the burgh magistrates but remained in the hands of the New Monkland heritors and kirk session.

Consequently, the failure of the system of relief to work effectively in Airdrie was blamed on the conservative element among New Monkland heritors and session. Airdrie's dissenting churches provided relief for some of the town poor out of their own funds but did not contribute to the official New Monkland parish poor fund. Nor did the dissenters have any recourse to compulsory assessment of Airdrie heritors and proprietors even if they thought the seriousness of local poverty required such a measure. Furthermore, dissenters claims that New Monkland heritors and kirk session were not fulfilling the legal requirement to provide relief for the poor of the whole parish seemed to be amply demonstrated by the reluctance of some New Monkland heritors to agree to contribute towards relief of the poor of Airdrie town.<sup>139</sup> Throughout the 'thirties and 'forties New Monkland heritors were frequently divided between those residing in the countryside who argued that Airdrie poor should not be aided from the New Monkland parish fund, and those resident in Airdrie who thought that the town's poor should be relieved from New Monkland parish resources. Nor did the Airdrie Established quoad sacra churches' obtain much credit for their help in the battle against poverty because they were expected to hand over monies for the poor to New Monkland's poor fund. This meant that Airdrie quoad sacra churches' efforts were associated with New Monkland kirk session and cast in a bad light by the dissenters.



The majority of people in need of relief in Airdrie were able bodied unemployed or poorly paid weavers, colliers and ironstone miners. As "occasional" poor they were not legally entitled to any help nor were their numbers accurately reflected in the New Monkland parish poor roll. The extent and nature of poverty in the town was thus obscured, much to the fury of local radicals.

New Monkland kirk sessions of the eighteenth century had considered their greatest problem with respect to poor relief to be vagrants and beggars coming into the parish in the hope of becoming settled and so able to claim relief when they fell into the "deserving" category.<sup>140</sup> By the opening years of the nineteenth century, sessions were faced with additional financial problems caused by heritors', especially non-residing heritors', failure to make sufficient contributions to the poor's fund. On several occasions between 1800 and 1811 the session and managers of the fund were forced to call for an immediate voluntary assessment in order to supply the needs of those people on the poor roll.<sup>141</sup> This policy of periodic voluntary assessments lasted until March 1811 when there were so many applications for support from the poor's fund that the managers decided that unless subscriptions amounted to threepence in the pound of actual rent upon lands or houses then a legal assessment would be imposed.<sup>142</sup> 1811 marked the beginning of five years of continuous



crisis management of parish poor relief and culminated towards the close of 1817 in a compulsory assessment of the heritors.<sup>143</sup> From this date until the Poor Law (Amendment) Act of 1845 legal assessments were the mainstay of New Monkland parish poor funds. In short, by 1820 - a decade before the great influx of people into both the landward parish and Airdrie town - New Monkland had in practice abandoned the voluntary system of poor relief.

This reality did not prevent James Begg from attempting to defend the voluntary system and to disguise the importance of assessment. He adhered to the view that compulsory assessment destroyed the social bond philosophy of traditional parish life by undermining the independence of the poor and their motivation to self-help. Writing in his New Statistical Account of New Monkland in 1835 Begg, almost in an aside, placed assessment last on the list of sources of revenue for the parish poor fund and criticised the dissenters in Airdrie for not contributing to the parish fund even when "their poor are supplied from these funds equally with others...."<sup>144</sup> Begg reckoned that "on average" there were 190 persons on the parish poor roll.<sup>145</sup> Monthly sums disbursed were between fifty and sixty pounds, with individuals receiving anything from two to ten shillings "depending on circumstances".<sup>146</sup> But he made no mention of the location of the parish poor nor did he attempt to compare "deserving" and "occasional" poverty. By implication from Begg's 1835 evidence, however, it is

clear that most of the parish poor were in Airdrie and were "occasional" rather than "deserving". His comments on the low pay, feeble condition and small stature of weavers - most of whom were in Airdrie - have already been noted. He also indicated that many colliers - again the bulk of whom lived in Airdrie - were in difficulties.

"Among the agricultural part of the population there is a great aversion to coming on the poor's fund; they consider it degrading. But that spirit is almost extinct among the manufacturing and mining population...."<sup>147</sup>

Giving evidence to the Commissioners on Religious Instruction in 1836<sup>148</sup> Begg was less reticent on the extent and nature of poverty in landward parish and town than he had been in his Statistical Account. Now, however, Begg was chiefly concerned with defence of the Established Church and of the argument, advanced by Thomas Chalmers, that the only solution to the moral and social problems of the poor and working classes in the towns and cities was more religious education and church accommodation, and therefore an increased State endowment to the Established Church to help pay for new churches. The Commissioners were told of "the very poorest of the people" of the parish who were chiefly among "weavers, colliers and iron-miners".<sup>149</sup> These theoretically occasional and undeserving poor numbered "several hundreds" in the parish.<sup>150</sup> Rev William Jackson of the West Church in Airdrie agreed and in his evidence to the Commissioners claimed, as did Begg,

that it was quite impossible to give pastoral superintendence to the "hundreds of poor" within the locality.<sup>151</sup>

By 1843 when Begg and other witnesses were called to give yet more evidence, this time to the Poor Law Commissioners, there could be no disguising the seriousness of both "deserving" and "occasional" poverty among the parish population, especially in Airdrie. The Poor Law Commissioners were impressed by the condition of a number of paupers in the town whom they visited in the November. They noted that these Airdrie paupers were in as good a condition as could reasonably be expected,

"considering the improvident habits of the mining population, to which class they chiefly belonged... None of them appeared in so low a condition as some of the poor visited in Edinburgh or Glasgow."<sup>152</sup>

However, as Begg's answers to the seventy questions sent out to every parish in Scotland from the Poor Law Commission show,<sup>153</sup> the apparently well-off paupers in Airdrie were not representative of the true extent of poverty and pauperism in the burgh. Two key facts emerge from Begg's answers to the questionnaire. First, there was a considerable increase in the number of people on the poor roll. Compared with the average total of 190 in 1835 there were now (1842-43) 320 on the permanent (that is, "deserving") roll and 25 on an "occasional" roll.<sup>154</sup> This

total of 345 on the official rolls represented an 81.5% increase on the 1835 figure.

Second, the monies raised from assessment (that is, the poor rate) had risen from £467<sup>155</sup> in 1835 to £932 in 1842.<sup>156</sup> Under the Voluntary system assessment was supposed to make up the deficiency in the poor's fund when income from church-door collections, mort cloth hire and other subscriptions or donations proved inadequate to supply demand. But the 1842 assessment amounted to a sum eight times greater than the £112 collected in the same year from voluntary giving, banns fees and mort cloth hire.<sup>157</sup> Moreover, even with a total of £1,044 raised in 1842 - £842 of which was distributed among those on the permanent roll, £184 among those on the occasional roll, leaving a mere £18 for all other needs<sup>158</sup> - it is clear that there was still a shortage of funds for poor relief. Certainly the doubling of assessment money between 1835 and 1842 was in line with an almost doubling of numbers on the parish poor rolls. But when we consider that the population of Airdrie alone had also doubled, from 6,594 to 12,418, between 1831 and 1841 it becomes difficult to accept that the "many hundreds" of the poorest people reported by Begg and Jackson in 1836 had either decreased in number or that they were in receipt of much financial aid. The many hundreds could hardly be accounted for by the 1842 poor roll's total of 345 persons. Nor does it seem credible, given the reports of Symons, Tancred and Tremenheere, that a figure

of 25 people on the "occasional" roll constituted anything like the true extent of permanent but theoretically occasional poverty. Indeed, Questions 49 to 52 of the Poor Law Commission questionnaire dealt specifically with relief for categories of able-bodied poor and in his answers Begg stated that some relief to these technically "occasional" poor was given, but very infrequently.<sup>159</sup>

By the 1830s, then, want was conspicuous in New Monkland parish. And especially in Airdrie, a large number of people's lives turned on the wheel of misfortune.

Between 1820 and 1845 the voluntary system of poor relief in New Monkland and Airdrie was abandoned in favour of compulsory assessment. What this meant in real terms was that a poor rate was levied on all residents within New Monkland parish who could afford to pay it.<sup>160</sup> Poverty, pauperism, poor relief and the disparity between rich and poor ranked alongside industrial and political unrest as one of the indicators of Airdrie's New World identity. Indeed, poverty, poor relief and the related issues of public health, sanitation and housing,<sup>161</sup> because they were immediate, domestic concerns, occupied many of the best minds in religious, political and welfare institutions. In doing so, the debate on the poor and poor laws played its part in regenerating and consolidating community identity in Airdrie at the expense of the older New Monkland parish identity in three ways.

First, although radicals and conservatives, dissenters and Established churchmen differed in their approaches to poverty and in their proposed solutions to it, they were, by and large, united in a desire to remove, or at least reduce the blemish of poverty from the Airdrie social landscape.

Second, since until 1845<sup>162</sup> the legal responsibility for poor relief lay with New Monkland heritors and session, the blame for failure to relieve the poor in Airdrie was laid at the doors of New Monkland kirk. Moreover, the imposition of a poor rate on all parish residents with the means to pay it angered Airdrie dissenters for as long as the Church of Scotland remained nominally in control of and responsible for poor relief, rate paying dissenters were in effect supplementing the continuation of the Establishment. This situation was made more unacceptable to the town's dissenters because of the reluctance of New Monkland rural heritors to contribute towards the relief of poverty in Airdrie.

Third, the rural heritors' hostility towards Airdrie did nothing to enhance the reputation of New Monkland kirk and parish in the eyes of Airdrie's radicals, trades unionists or Chartists. On the contrary, it deepened the desire to be rid of all associations with the old parish system.

James Begg was aware of and deeply concerned about poverty in Airdrie. As a conservative Evangelical, however, he fell victim to criticism from the town's dissenters, radicals and working class organisations because he clung to the traditional view of the poor and poor relief even when it had become clear that the voluntary system was a failure. The irony is that many people in Airdrie's middle class and, indeed, respectable working class shared his attitude to the poor in varying degrees; namely, that in large part, poverty was the fault of the poor themselves, the product of improvident and immoral living. But in Begg's case such an attitude, when coupled with his commitment to the Established Church and his antagonism towards radicals and trades unions,<sup>163</sup> made him appear as a defender of narrow, vested conservative rural interests against the welfare of Airdrie people.

#### Airdrie and the Impact of Industrialisation - Consolidation and Renewal

One way to look at the contrasting images of Airdrie that have been considered in this chapter would be to explain them as reflecting the contradictions and class-conflict of an emerging capitalist economic system. This by itself, however, is an inadequate explanation of what was happening in Airdrie in the decades after 1820. The salient fact to emerge from the attempt to understand the town under the



impact of industrialisation is rather that contrasts generated a richly diverse community of a different kind from the older New Monkland parish community identity. From Pigot's Airdrie to pauper's Airdrie - all these images and realities were co-existent. Contradictions, or less emotively, dynamic tension consolidated and renewed the burgh's community identity; dynamic tension within Airdrie, and between Airdrie and the outside world. Community did not consist of a continued process of integration but was rather an aggregation. After 1820 the structural bases of Airdrie boundaries became blurred as a consequence of outside influences pushing-in. The most important outside influence coming into the town was people but precisely because community was an aggregating device rather than an integrating mechanism, and because it was people who made community, the impact of newcomers on Airdrie served to recreate community and to reinforce the town's distinctiveness. The swelling population was accommodated within the existing burgh bounds, in and around Airdrie's historic centres and, more importantly, it was embraced by local political, religious and cultural traditions. The prior existence of Airdrie as weaving community meant that older symbolic boundaries were passed on to newcomers who then reinterpreted them in different and new ways.

Furthermore, as the structural bases of Airdrie's boundaries became blurred, so the town's symbolic boundaries became strengthened through embellishment, hence



the continuation of, for example, the weavers' myth and the Covenanters' myth. In addition, structures imported across the existing community's boundaries provided new media for the expression of indigenous meaning. Of course, no structures were really genuinely outside influences for there was always a degree of support from inside. (The advance of railways in and around Airdrie, or Parliamentary Reform are cases in point). Indeed, this is precisely why structures imported across Airdrie's boundaries provided new media for indigenous meaning.

Many developments in Airdrie after 1820, public and private, attracted support from a diversity of social groups. But this did not necessarily indicate the consolidation of a hegemonic bourgeois ideology. Certainly by the middle of the nineteenth century the burgh had acquired many features and institutions that were linked with an active middle-class, keen on progress and efficiency. But weavers, and later colliers, were as enthusiastic as any section of the middle class when it came to progress and social reform. Their enthusiasm was the product of their own cultures of independency and concern for the common good, and was not a pale imitation of middle class values. People below the middle classes on the social scale did not have to be dominated by bourgeois ideology in order to appreciate and to want the benefits of sanitary, economic and political reform, or of temperance and religion.

Nor was the issue of community confined to Airdrie's middle class. On the contrary, community was, if anything, more important to the working class than to the middle class. Contemporary commentators noticed that events such as the laying of the foundation stone of the town chambers, the passage of the reform bill or the opening of Hallcraig railway station were not just projected as community occasions and as celebrations of community, they were understood as such. It does not matter that for many people the public holidays that often accompanied these events were more important than the pompous ceremonies. Public celebrations of reform or a new railway station strengthened Airdrie's sense of place and distinctiveness. The town chambers, the burgh's Parliamentary status or the railway station were all part of the continuing construction of community at Airdrie.

No doubt for the town's poor people the struggle for survival was a preoccupation that excluded them from participating in the concerns and pursuits of middle class or artisan living. A savings bank, for example, was of little use to those who had nothing left over at the end of the week because they did not earn enough to begin with. Nevertheless, to be a member of an economically marginal and powerless group did not leave one outside of community. Public buildings and the institutions that they represented had an important symbolic role for the poor in two ways.

First, by helping to demarcate Airdrie such buildings and the institutions they represented defined the poor as Airdrie's poor. Second, poor citizens could define themselves against buildings and institutions, and other social groups, as Airdrie's poor. Poor people interpreted symbols in their own way. An impoverished miner might think that the Savings Bank or the Wellwynd Church was "no' for the likes of me" but this did not mean that he had no sense of community. On the contrary, it made his poverty all the harder to bear because symbolic boundaries enabled him to think of himself as one of Airdrie's poor people rather than an anonymous member of a nebulous mass called "the poor". It was the lack of anonymity that made poverty so demoralising.

Between 1820 and 1850 within a changing and expanding Airdrie different groups of people interpreted the symbols of community in different ways and defined themselves against each other, in complementary opposition. The superficial unity which belonging to the same place and focusing on a set of commonly held symbols suggested cannot disguise the fact that community was an aggregating device, its constituent segments existing in dialectical relationship in which each informed and enriched the ideas of the other. And, as we shall see, more than any other institutions it was Airdrie's churches which illustrated and encouraged this process. Community at Airdrie did not

necessarily mean uniformity. It was a commonality of forms the meaning of which varied considerably among individuals and groups. Inherent contradictions did not subvert or fragment coherence, expressed by boundaries, because community was an *mêlée* of symbols. Symbols permitted individuality and commonality to be reconciled. People in Airdrie or coming into Airdrie could map out their social identities and find their orientation in the midst of flux and change, and among relationships that were symbolically close to them rather than in relation to a more abstract sense of class or of society. People made community, through pragmatic and resourceful use of symbols, especially when the processes and consequences of change threatened Airdrie's identity.

### Notes

1. Pigot and Company's New Commercial Directory of Scotland for 1825-26, J pigot, London, 1826. pp 453-455.
2. Pigot and Company's National Commercial Directory of the Whole of Scotland, J Pigot, London, 1837, pp 524-526.
3. Ibid, p 524.
4. Samuel Lewis, A Topographical Dictionary of Scotland, Volume I, 'From Abbey to Jura', London, 1846, p 33.
5. The Parliamentary Gazeteer of Scotland, Volume I, A - H, A Fullerton, Edinburgh, 1851, p 21.
6. Gordon M Wilson, Alexander MacDonald: Leader of the Miners, Aberdeen University Press, 1982, p 16.
7. Thomas Tancred, Report on the Employment of Children and Young Persons in the Collieries and Ironworks in the West of Scotland, Parliamentary Papers, Volume XVI, 1842, p 312.
8. Ibid, p 313.
9. Ibid, p 330 and pp 346-47.
10. Ibid, p 313.
11. Ibid, p 313.
12. Ibid, p 362. Robert Baird of Gartsherrie was a partner in the Gartsherrie Ironworks and Collieries.
13. Ibid, p 313.
14. Ibid, p 313.
15. See: Alan B Campbell, The Lanarkshire Miners: A Social History of the Trade Union, 1775-1874, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1979.

Esp. Chapter 5, 'Coatbridge and Larkhall: A Comparative Portrait', pp 117-144.

Chapter 6, 'Solidarity and Social Structure in Coatbridge and Larkhall', pp 145-177.

and Peter Drummond and James Smith, Coatbridge: Three Centuries of Change, Monklands Library Services Department, 1989.

16. Campbell, op cit, p 94  
Drummond and Smith, op cit, p 32.
17. Drummond and Smith, op cit, p 33.
18. Ibid, p 36.
19. Ibid, p 36.
20. Ibid, p 36.  
see also: Campbell, op cit, p 121.
21. Wilson, op cit, p 17.
22. Seymoure Tremenheere, Report on the Mining Population in Parts of Scotland and Staffordshire, P P, Volume XVI, 1844, pp 15-47.
23. Wilson, op cit, p 17.
24. Ibid, p 17.
25. Ibid, p 17.
26. Tremenheere, op cit, p 16.
27. Ibid, p 16.
28. Ibid, p 16.
29. Ibid, p 20.
30. Ibid, p 18.
31. Ibid, p 18-19.
32. T C Smout, A Century of Scottish People, Collins, Glasgow, 1986, p 9.
33. Tremenheere, op cit, p 19.
34. Ibid, p 19.
35. Robert Duncan, Conflict and Crisis: Monklands Miners and General Strike, 1842, Monklands Libraries Pamphlet.
36. Laurance J Saunders, Scottish Democracy 1815-1840: The Intellectual and Social Background, Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1950, p 147.

37. Ibid, p 150.
38. Paul Mitchell, 'Handloom Weavers Trade Unionism in Airdrie 1832-1837', Unpublished BA Hons Thesis, School of History, Manchester University, 1986, p 21.
39. Ibid, pp 21-22.
40. Thomas Tancred, op cit, p 364.  
  
James Knox, Airdrie: A Historical Sketch, Baird and Hamilton, Airdrie, 1921, p 57.  
  
Paul Mitchell, op cit, p 21.
41. Knox, op cit, p 57 and pp 125-126.
42. Ibid, p 125.
43. "If towns of much less magnitude and far less importance, can support periodical publications why may not Airdrie? It shall be ours to act diligently; let it be yours ye inhabitants of Airdrie to give countenance and support."  
  
The Airdrie Literary Album, No 1, Saturday December 6, 1828, p 2.
44. Published as a weekly The Airdrie and Coatbridge Luminary and Old and New Monkland Advertiser first appeared on Saturday, 22 May 1847 priced 4d. Its motto was "The Liberty of the Press is the Palladium of all our Civil and Religious Liberties."  
  
The paper ran from May 1847 to August 1847 then ceased. It reappeared in December 1851 under the same motto and still priced 4d.
45. Airdrie Luminary, No 1, Saturday 22 May 1847, Editorial.
46. Ibid, No 1, Saturday 22 May 1847.
47. Ibid, No 1, Saturday 22 May 1847.
48. Ibid, No 1, Saturday 22 May 1847.

When the Luminary was relaunched in 1851 the editors declared that the motivations for its reissue were similar to those which induced its origination.

"Then, as now, an extensive district teeming with vast mineral wealth and an industrial population was unrepresented in the newspaper press. It will be our duty as heretofore to express... and ... to exusciate

the public mind to a consideration and settlement of the great questions at issue between constitutional government; and to promulgate those political principles, and advocate the popular participation in those political rights, without which the name of Liberty is a fraudulent and delusive mockery...."

Luminary, No 1, Thursday, December 18, 1851.

49. Mitchell, op cit, p 23.
50. John MacArthur, New Monkland Parish, C L Wright, Glasgow, 1890, p 227.  
Knox, op cit, p 71  
Mitchell, op cit, p 23.
51. Mitchell, op cit, p 23.
52. M Stenton, Who's Who of British Members of Parliament, Volume 1, 1832-1885, Harvester, London, 1976, p 155.
53. The Falkirk District of Burghs comprised Falkirk, Airdrie, Hamilton, Lanark, Linlithgow with in 1832 a total of 969 electors. By 1880 the number of electors was still only 5,333. Airdrie's population alone according to the 1881 Census stood at 13,363.... For these and other electoral data (1832-1880),  
  
F W S Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results 1832-1885, MacMillan, London, 1977, pp 544 545.
54. Mitchell, op cit, p 24.
55. Ibid, p 26.
56. M Stenton, op cit, Volume 1, p 18.
57. Mitchell, op cit, p 71.
58. Paul Mitchell, op cit,
59. Ibid, p 28.
60. Ibid, p 28.
61. Ibid, p 28.
62. Ibid, p 26.
63. Ibid, p 32.
64. Ibid, p 33.
65. Ibid, p 33.



66. Ibid, p 33.
67. Ibid, p 34.
68. Ibid, p 35.
69. Ibid, p 53.
70. Ibid, p 51-63.
71. Ibid, p 51-52.
72. Ibid, p 51.
73. Ibid, p 54.
74. Ibid, p 53-54.
75. Ibid, p 57-65.
76. Ibid, p 67.
77. Ibid, p 67.
78. See: Norman Murray, The Scottish Handloom Weavers 1790-1850, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1978, pp 196-197.
79. Mitchell, op cit, p 67-68.
80. Ibid, p 67-68.
81. Ibid, p 68.
82. Ibid, p 68.
83. Ibid, p 79.
84. Ibid, p 77.
85. Reports from Assistant Handloom Weavers' Commissioners, March 1839, Jellinger Symons, Report on the South of Scotland, February 1839, P P, Volume XLII, 1839, p 55.
86. Little original research has been done on miners and miners unions at Airdrie specifically, or for that matter at Coatbridge or Holytown and the other towns and villages of Old and New Monkland parishes. Available studies of miners in Scotland have tended to concentrate on fairly wide geographical areas - Lanarkshire, or the West of Scotland for example - and this is understandable given the difficulties of locating, gathering, selecting and analyzing primary sources relevant to small localities. But there is another, ideological reason why most historians who

have so far written about the miners have opted for large rather than small geographical areas; they have been working under the assumption that miners were united in their consciousness of themselves as the shock-troops of an emerging, increasingly assertive working class. In the only significant study of miners in and around Airdrie during the '30s and '40s Robert Duncan has taken the assumption of class consciousness for granted. He too looks at a large geographical entity "the Monklands". But, as has been illustrated, once Monkland parish was divided in the seventeenth century the Old and New parishes developed separately, their differences accentuated with the rise of Airdrie and then Coatbridge. Industrialisation reinforced difference every bit as much as similarity. The label "Monklands" in fact disguises rich and often critical distinctions among discrete communities which have existed in the presumed unity of the area covered by it.

87. Alan Campbell has argued that the nature of colliery work during the first half of the nineteenth century "gave rise to a spectrum of values which can be characterised as independence." Miners' attitudes can best be analyzed within the perspective of the Independent Collier. The main features of this independence were the colliers pride in the skilled nature of their work and a belief in their right to control the workplace.

From the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries Scots colliers had existed in a state of serfdom and in this context they developed as an hereditary caste, with a distinctive occupational culture. Serfdom had arisen from the need to maintain a constant supply of labour in an occupation that was hard and unattractive. The ending of serfdom in the late eighteenth century was a result of employers' wish to foster the growth of the labour supply in order that they could cash-in on the new demand for coal stimulated by the rise of the iron industry. Abolition of serfdom, however, did not increase the supply of labour. Consequently, in the decades after their emancipation the Scots colliers enjoyed a standard of living which was amongst the highest in the labouring population.

Campbell, op cit, Introduction and Part One, pp 1-90.

88. Ibid, p 2.
89. Ibid, p 2.
90. Ibid, p 2.
91. Ibid, p 49.

92. Ibid, pp 9-23, 49-90  
and: Gordon M Wilson, 'The Strike Policy of the Miners of the West of Scotland', Ian MacDougall, Essays in Scottish Labour History, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1978, p 29.
93. Campbell, op cit, p 52.
94. Gordon M Wilson, Alexander MacDonald: Leader of the Miners, p 35.
95. Ibid, p 35.
96. Ibid, 34-35.
97. Ibid, p 37.
98. Gordon Wilson, Alexander MacDonald, p 39-40.  
Campbell, op cit, pp 80-83, pp 93-116.
99. Campbell, op cit, pp 80-81.
100. Ibid, pp 80-81.
101. Duncan, op cit, p 10.
102. Campbell, op cit, pp 82-83.
103. Ibid, pp 82-83.
104. Ibid, pp 83-84.
105. Wilson, Alexander MacDonald, pp 40-44.
106. Ibid, p 19.
107. Wilson, Alexander MacDonald, p 41.
108. Duncan, p 25.
109. Wilson, 'The Strike Policy of the Miners', MacDougall, op cit, p 48.  
Wilson, Alexander MacDonald, p 45.
110. Wilson, Alexander MacDonald, pp 46-47.
111. Ibid, p 47.
112. Ibid, p 47.
113. Wilson, 'The Strike Policy of the Miners', MacDougall, op cit, pp 40-42.

114. Ibid, p 42.
115. Campbell, op cit, Chapter 8, 'Independence, Industrial Discipline and Social Control', pp 205-244.
- Wilson, 'The Strike Policy of the Miners', MacDougal, op cit, pp 53-56.
116. General Accounts of Chartism:
- Dorothy Thompson, The Chartists: Popular Politics in the Industrial Revolution, Wildwood House, Aldershot, 1986.
- D G Wright, Popular Radicalism: The Working Class Experience 1780-1880, Longman, London, 1988.
- Scottish Chartism:
- Alexander Wilson, The Chartist Movement in Scotland, Manchester University Press, 1970.
- Leslie C Wright, Scottish Chartism, Oliver & Boyd, Edinburgh, 1953.
- W Hamish Fraser, 'The Scottish Context of Chartism', in: T Brotherstone, Covenant, Charter and Party: Traditions of Revolt and Protest in Modern Scottish History, Aberdeen University Press, 1989.
- Airdrie Context:
- Paul Mitchell, op cit.
- Chartism and Weavers
- Norman Murray, op cit, pp 228-233.
117. Wilson, op cit, pp 67-68.
- Murray, op cit, pp 230-31.
118. Mitchell, op cit, p 70.
119. Wright, op cit, pp 123-4.
120. Wilson, op cit, pp 97-98.
121. Wright, op cit, p 123.
122. The Scottish Patriot, May 9, 1840.
123. Text of the Airdrie petition approved at the meeting of May 4 1840, printed in The Scottish Patriot, May 23, 1840.

124. Wilson, op cit, pp 133-134.
125. Ibid, p 135.
126. See Chapter 8 following.
127. Wright, op cit, p 125.
128. James Knox, The Triumph of Thrift: The Story of the Savings Bank of Airdrie, Baird and Hamilton, Airdrie, 1927, p 60.
129. Mitchell, op cit, p 70.
130. Wilson, op cit, pp 167-169.
131. Mitchell, op cit, p 70.

also: Thomas Tancred, Report (1842) - Evidence of William Miller - p 364.

According to Miller, colliers in the Airdrie and Coatbridge districts took in newspapers

"chiefly Fergus O'Conner's Northern Star, and the Glasgow Patriot..."

132. Wright, op cit, p 146-147.
133. Wilson, op cit, p 190.
134. Dorothy Thompson, op cit, p 342.
135. L J Saunders, Scottish Democracy, p 161.
136. Cf Saunders, Scottish Democracy, p 192.
137. These had been formulated by the reformed Church of Scotland in the late sixteenth century and in some respects reflected contemporary theological emphasis on individual salvation. They remained largely unaltered down to the mid-nineteenth century by which time they were quite inadequate to deal with the scale of poverty.

The Scottish Poor Laws were an essential component of the Presbyterian Establishment. Administration of poor funds and of poor relief was a strictly local affair. Parish heritors and kirk session, or in burghs the magistrates, served as the units and agency of management. Only the "deserving" poor - usually defined as the old and infirm, the handicapped, orphans and lunatics - had any legal entitlement to relief. The "occasional" poor, that is able-bodied persons in temporary poverty through illness, accident or unemployment, had no legal right to relief. By

convention the "occasional" poor were given some aid but even more than for the deserving poor, this was only intended to supplement help from family, friends or charitable societies.

Funds for the relief of the poor were raised from church-door collections, hire of mort cloths, fees charged for the proclamation of marriage banns, and bequests or gifts. If at any given time income from these sources was insufficient to supply the needs of the deserving poor on the parish poor roll then heritors could voluntarily assess themselves by setting a poor rate per pound on their land rental values. If a voluntary assessment failed to raise enough money or could not be agreed upon at all, then a compulsory or legal assessment could be imposed on the heritors by the kirk session and if necessary enforced by the civil courts. This last option was rarely used before the early nineteenth century for the simple reason that heritors were the kirk session in pre-industrial society and preferred voluntarily to assess themselves, which was usually cheaper than compulsory assessment.

The basis of the Scottish system of poor relief was its voluntary nature. It was designed to discourage indiscriminate giving to the "occasional" poor in the belief that otherwise those in the "occasional" category would become dependent and their motivation to self-help undermined. Moreover, the distinction between deserving and undeserving poor had been conceived in sixteenth century society which was made up of small, fairly tight-knit rural communities and burghs where kinship ties were strong and where people were expected to help their poor relations, friends, neighbours and employees with goods in kind. The poor laws were meant to stop scrounging, protect the interests of the deserving poor and to develop family and communal responsibilities. They helped to sustain the Church as an agency of social justice and social control and were also invested with a soteriological function in that, theoretically, they encouraged works indicative of faith.

However, by the early nineteenth century the rise in population and of the towns and cities brought the Scottish system of poor relief to the verge of collapse. The distinction between deserving and undeserving poor became an unworkable anachronism. By the 1820s the "occasional" poor had not only increased in numbers but also accounted for the bulk of the permanently poor, usually the victims of meagre wages and frequent unemployment. Even workers and their families who enjoyed prosperity when wages were high existed against a background of omnipresent poverty into which they could easily fall when the



economy moved into periods of slump. The bulk of the working classes lived in close proximity to a subsistence existence. In addition many of the parishes that embraced a town or city found it increasingly difficult to raise adequate poor funds because large numbers of their heritors had become absentee landlords.

For general accounts of the Scottish System of Poor Relief:

T C Smout, A History of the Scottish People, 1560-1830, Fontana/Collins, Glasgow, 1972.

T C Smout, A Century of the Scottish People, 1830-1950, Collins, Glasgow, 1986.

L J Saunders, op cit, esp. Part III, 'Rich and Poor, Good and Bad, pp 161-237.

Sidney and Olive Checkland, Industry and Ethos: Scotland 1832-1914, Edward Arnold, London, 1984, esp. Chapters 5, 6 and 7, pp 86-132.

Olive Checkland, Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland: Social Welfare and the Voluntary Principle, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1980, esp. Preface, pp 1-9.

Rosalind Mitchison, 'The Poor Law' in Divine and Mitchison, People and Society in Scotland, Volume I 1760-1830, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1988, pp 252-267.

M A Crowther, 'Poverty, Health and Welfare', in Fraser and Morris, People and Society in Scotland, Volume II, 1830-1914, John Donald, Edinburgh, 1990.

Between 1700 and 1800, 93 out of 700 parishes (13%) adopted legal assessment. By 1839 this figure had risen to 236 out of 900 parishes (26%) and in the same year, of parishes with more than 10,000 people, all but one were under legal assessment. [Saunders, op cit, p 203].

138. The national debate revolved around two main arguments: one in defence of the Voluntary principle, championed by Thomas Chalmers, and the other calling for reform of the Scottish Poor Laws and the imposition of legal compulsory poor rates, associated with Dr W P Alison.

see: S J Brown, Thomas Chalmers and the Godly Commonwealth, Oxford University Press, 1982, pp 67-68.

and M A Crowther, op cit, pp 266-267.

139. For example: On Wednesday, February 11, 1834 the Airdrie correspondent of the Glasgow Free Press reported "another stormy discussion" between landward heritors and Airdrie heritors on the assessment for poor relief. The landward heritors argued that as they were under no obligation to support the poor at Airdrie only the landward poor should be assisted and the assessment calculated accordingly. They refused to sanction any borrowing for the current half year. The Airdrie heritors were in a minority at the meeting and their counter-arguments were defeated. The GFP correspondent felt moved to alert the other Airdrie heritors (the ones not at the poor relief meeting) to "the dangers of such precedents" as that set by the landward heritors' victory.

140. William Mack, 'Parish of New or East Monkland', The Statistical Account of Scotland, 1791-1799, Grant and Withrington reprint edn, Volume VII, Lanarkshire and Renfrewshire, p 518.

Extracts from the Heritors' Minute Books in: John MacArthur, New Monkland Parish, pp 134-136, 143-146.

John MacArthur, New Monkland Parish, p 133.

141. In January 1801, for instance, one hundred pounds was required

"in aid of the ordinary funds to support the poor of the parish til next harvest."

To avoid the necessity of a compulsory assessment a voluntary subscription fund was opened to which all heritors were urged to contribute. If this step failed to raise enough money, the managers warned, as assessment

"of twenty-five shillings sterling on each ploughgate of land in the parish..."

would be set.

By September the managers of the poor's fund were still in difficulties and believed that some of their problems were caused by "stranger-poor" begging or trying to settle in the parish. It was resolved to pay a five shilling reward to constables at Airdrie or any others who would inform the poor fund treasurer of any stranger-poor in the parish. As a further prevention against begging and vagrancy a five shilling reward was offered to anyone who provided information on persons giving lodgings or tenancies to "stranger-poor, vagrants or idle or disorderly persons". In addition, any lodging house proprietors providing residence for stranger-poor or vagrants were



to be subject to prosecution. Finally, since many of the heritors had not subscribed under the recommendations of January, a voluntary assessment was called for and set at the January rate.

Extracts from the Heritors' Minute Book, John MacArthur, New Monkland Parish, pp 134-135.

142. MacArthur, op cit, p 144.

143. Ibid, pp 145-146.

144. Rev James Begg, 'Parish of New Monkland...', completed in 1835; published in 1841.

New Statistical Account of Scotland, Volume VI, Lanark, Wm Blackwood, Edinburgh, 1841, p 248.

145. Ibid, p 248.

146. Ibid, p 248.

147. Ibid, p 248.

148. Eighth Report by the Commissioner of Religious Instruction, Scotland - Appendix, Parliamentary Papers, Volume XXVI, 1839, p 152-155.

For the context and purposes of the Commission on Religious Instruction see Chapters 8 and 9 following.

149. Eighth Report by the Commissioners of Religious Instruction, Appendix PP XXVII, 1839, p 155.

150. Ibid, p 155.

151. Ibid, p 149.

152. Poor Law Inquiry Commission (Scotland), III, Minutes of Evidence Taken, PP Volume 22, 1844, p 380.

153. Begg's answers to the questionnaire are contained in three consecutive volumes of the Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland) Reports:

Questions 1-28 are in Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland) IV, Appendix to Report p 23, 1844.

Questions 29-56 in Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland) V, Appendix to Report, p 24, 1844.

Questions 57-70 in Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland) VI, Appendix to Report, p 25, 1844.

154. Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland) V, Appendix to Report, Answer to question 53, p 24, 1844.

155. James Begg, 'Parish of New Monkland', New Statistical Account, p 248.
156. Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland) V, Appendix to Report, p 24, 1844. Answer to question 33. The precise figure was £932 6s 5½d.
157. Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland) V, Appendix to Report, p 24, 1844. Answers to questions 35,36 and 37. The precise sum was £112 2s 3½p.
158. Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland) V, Appendix to Report, p 24, 1844. Answers to questions 38 and 39.
159. Questions 49 to 52 asked about relief given to able-bodied men either unemployed or temporarily sick; able-bodied single women either unemployed or temporarily sick; able-bodied widows with one child; single women; mothers with illegitimate children, and wives deserted by their husbands.

[Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland) V, p 24, 1844].

In answer to questions 61, 65 and 66 concerning provision from the poor's fund for free education for pauper children, especially between the ages of 6 and 14, Begg stated that there was no provision throughout the whole parish. There was, however,

"one charitable society for teaching and clothing orphans and destitute children."

[Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland) VI, p 25, 1844].

Dissenters in Airdrie may have been irritated by Begg's failure to mention their efforts to provide free education for poor children but he can perhaps be excused the omission because the Poor Law questions were specifically concerned with free education provided by the parish poor's fund.

The charitable society for orphans and destitute children merits further treatment here. Formed in 1806, the East Monkland Orphans Society was a classic example of paternalistic philanthropy operating within the framework of the voluntary system of poor relief. In addition, its work was supported by ministers from all denominations and testified to the strength of Evangelical culture. Rev Andrew Duncanson of Wellwynd preached a sermon before the members of the Society to the poor and fatherless. This was printed (to be sold for the benefit of the Society) in 1808, and the published version contained an appendix outlining the history, constitution and aims of the organisation.

In 1806 a small number of people decided to put to good use a sum of money left unclaimed and in the hands of the Treasurer, upon the dissolution of an Army of Reserve Society. Airdrie Vocal Music Institution offered to give over all profits arising from their concerts for the founding and support of a society for the benefit of destitute orphans and fatherless children. All members of the vocal institution were then invited to become members of the new Orphan Society with the privilege of choosing three of their own number annually to serve as directors, exclusive of their right of voting, at times of election, with other members. All ministers of the different denominations in New Monkland parish were also enrolled as members of the Society. Other persons wishing to become members could do so on payment of one guinea or of five shillings at entry and one shilling per annum.

Society funds were managed by twelve directors, including the preses, treasurer and clerk. Directors were chosen annually in October and met four times a year to appoint two of their number to visit the children in receipt of the Society's charity.

The aims of the Society and Duncanson's sermon of 1807 provide neat illustrations of just how deeply-rooted the distinction between deserving and undeserving poor was in Scottish welfare philosophy. Moral education and clothing were of prime concern. But the Society was not intended to provide fully for the needs of orphans already on the parish relief fund. Rather, supplementary aid would be given to such orphans. In addition, help was to be given to orphans and destitute children who, in Duncanson's words

"deserve no benefit from the parish fund or have no legal claim to it." (Sermon, p 42)

Charity could also be extended to children of families in straitened circumstances. Duncanson emphasised that the extent of the Society's relief was not a reflection

"against those who are trustees of the parish charitable fund." (Sermon p 43)

Indeed he was careful to avoid any criticism of the parish poor relief and thus of the Established Church.

160. According to Begg,

"The one half of the assessment is levied on rental, the other half on the population of the

parish, according to their means, and is fixed by a jury."

[Poor Law Inquiry (Scotland), Appendix to Report, p 24, 1844. Answer to question 43].

161. Public health, sanitation and housing conditions were high on Airdrie radicals and liberals agenda. William Miller in his reports on Airdrie of the early 1830s in Glasgow Free Press constantly berated burgh authorities for their negligence or lack of success in all of these fields. He was at his most acid during the cholera epidemic of 1832. Later, in the late 'forties and early 'fifties the radical-liberal arguments for better health provision, sanitation and housing in Airdrie were vociferously put in the pages of the Airdrie and Coatbridge Luminary. Indeed, in the very first edition of that newspaper the editors pledged to,

"lay bear and extirpate the sanitary evils that afflict the large masses of the community".

[The Airdrie and Coatbridge Luminary, No 1, Saturday 22 May 1847].

The Luminary proceeded to implement this promise by carrying a front page report on the second issue describing the deplorable sanitary conditions of the Airdrie neighbourhood and suggesting that the Lord Advocate be requested to bring in a Public Health Act for Scotland.

At Airdrie, the report declared,

"steps should be taken by those portions of the community who perceive the intimate connexion between ill-drained, damp, dirty and overcrowded dwellings, and physical and moral deterioration. We cannot expect the low state of morals and lack of clean and orderly habits so obvious in numerous instances in this neighbourhood to be changed for the better unless public opinion be brought to bear on it."

[Luminary, No 2, Saturday, May 29, 1847].

Squalid living conditions, the report continued, were not confined to the destitute. Instances of ten or twelve people sleeping in one room were common not only among the casual and outcast but also among those earning regular wages.

In June of 1847 the paper continued its campaign for sanitation and public health measures with an

editorial calling for improved water supplies for Airdrie and commenting on the

"folly of a community of the extent of ours being suffered to want the first and simplest necessity of life in the midst of abundance."

[Luminary, Saturday, June 12, 1847].

This reflected a

"slur on the public spirit of the locality"

[Luminary, No 4, Saturday, June 12, 1847].

Why, the editorial demanded, should Airdrie want for clean water when other places of "minor importance" were obtaining supplies. Water was essential for the working classes in particular so that they could maintain their cleanliness and keep up their dignity. Ablution should be deemed "as essential to propriety in our terrestrial paradise as in Mahomet's. The prophet has been wisely celebrated for the portion of his policy which entailed perpetual washings on his followers; for, if not realising for them the assertion that 'every Turk is born noble', it renders every Turk at least a gentleman in scrupulous cleanliness. We don't expect our mining and manufacturing population to become 'gentlemen' or 'nobles' any more than we expect them to become Turks. But... we commend ablution to their notice as a cheap and easy form of keeping up their dignity."

[Luminary, No 4, June 12, 1847].

The editorial concluded by attacking the powers that be for neglecting to initiate a programme for water purification and warned that when the hot summer weather came

"whilst elsewhere holiday people at least are enjoying their Wenham ice and enjoying their sherry, in Airdrie we shall find a mixture to drink [sic] compounded partly of animal, partly of vegetable and partly earthy matter, which it will baffle the sages to name as a liquor.... We call upon those who have interest in the locality in trust to take immediate steps, ere the ravages of febrile manition, and the desolating influence of filth and nuisance sweep down on our heads, to provide a supply of pure, fresh water for this place."

[Luminary, No 4, Saturday, June 12, 1847].

162. For a summary of the terms of the 1845 Poor Law (Amendment) Act, its effects, strengths and weaknesses:

M A Crowther, in Fraser and Morris, op cit, pp 267-268.

163. In New Statistical Account (1835) Begg bemoaned,  
"the frequent associations and combinations which prevail here,... connected with similar combinations in different parts of the country to raise the price of Labour."

Such combinations were artificial interventions in the natural laws of supply and demand. They were

"very hurtful. They interrupt trade and attempt what is impracticable, as the price of all labour must be regulated by demand. They keep trades' people in a constant state of agitation, and make them spend much of their time and money in attending their frequent meetings. These combinations prevail most among the colliers and weavers."

[Begg, New Statistical Account, p 249].